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Sustainable development: promotion of new and renewable sources of energy

Reliable and stable transit of energy and its role in ensuring sustainable development and international cooperation

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The reliable and stable transit of energy is an issue that is essential to sustainable development. Energy transit will continue to demand attention as the transition to a global economy progresses. The unique characteristics of energy transit include reliance on fixed infrastructures, high up-front investments and large economies of scale, capacity constraints, pipelines that traverse multiple legal jurisdictions, and its direct contribution to energy security. Considering that many countries do not possess sufficient energy resources, the need to import such resources through pipelines and other transportation systems has become increasingly important. The growing dependence of consuming countries on imported energy has greatly increased the volumes of energy traded across borders. Transit occurs principally through fixed infrastructures and passes through an increasing number of sovereign jurisdictions, which poses a number of management challenges. There are opportunities for reconciling the interests of energy producing, consuming and transit countries. Energy transit requires extensive international cooperation to promote reliable transportation to international markets. The value of having a balanced and efficient framework for developing partnerships is widely recognized. The ultimate goal of reliable and stable energy transit, whether for trade or consumption, is to ensure continued progress towards sustainable development.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 67/263, the General Assembly noted that stable, efficient and reliable energy transportation, as a key factor of sustainable development, was in the interest of the entire international community. The Assembly recognized the need for extensive international cooperation to promote the reliable transportation of energy to international markets through pipelines and other transportation systems.

2. The present report is submitted in response to resolution 67/263, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its sixty-ninth session a summary report of the views of Member States and relevant entities of the United Nations system on issues relating to the reliable and stable transit of energy and on possible modalities for international cooperation.

3. At the High-level Conference on Reliable and Stable Transit of Energy and its Role in Ensuring Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, held in Ashgabat on 23 April 2009, Member States, international organizations and companies emphasized their willingness to cooperate on the transit and consumption of energy resources. Participants at the Conference noted the importance of clear regulation of the whole set of rights and responsibilities of energy producing, consuming and transit countries, taking into consideration the norms and principles of modern international law (see A/63/843, annex).

II. Overview of energy transit

A. Energy security and transit

4. Access to energy is essential for strengthening economies, achieving equity, eradicating poverty and pursuing sustainable development. A key component of access to energy is energy security. Energy security is based on the notion that uninterrupted supplies of energy are critical for the healthy functioning of an economy. An exact definition of energy security has not been globally agreed upon. Energy security has different meanings to different people at different moments in time.[1] Traditionally, energy security has been associated with securing access to oil supplies. However, with a rise in natural gas use and renewable energy, the concept has been widened to cover other fuels. It has also been used to refer to the reliability of electricity supply systems. Power blackouts on both the east and west coasts of the United States of America, in Europe and in the Russian Federation, and chronic shortages of electric power in China, India and other developing countries, indicate that all nations face energy security concerns.[2]

5. For energy to be secure, it must be available, accessible, affordable, reliable and sustainable. Availability refers to the actual physical presence of energy resources. Accessibility is a function of the distance between the points of production and consumption of resources, particularly when a country accesses resources from outside its borders. Affordability is a reflection of the market equilibrium price paid by consumers that allows producers to cover their costs or to

[1] Kruyt and others, "Indicators for energy security", *Energy Policy*, vol. 37, No. 6 (June 2009), pp. 2166-2181.

[2] Daniel Yergin, "Ensuring energy security", *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2006), p. 70.

make a reasonable profit. In order to be reliable, energy supplies should not be subject to political or technical disruptions, and delivery paths should remain unencumbered. Sustainability refers to the long-term availability of energy resources, which entails efficient allocation over time, diversification of resources, and/or transitioning to alternative renewable fuels.

6. At the global level, achieving sustainable energy for all depends very much on the reliable and stable transit of energy in all forms. This is a critical element in energy security and a necessary condition for mobilizing investment. In addition, overall system efficiency depends on interconnectivity and interdependence, neither of which is possible without the reliable and stable transit of energy.

7. One of the main challenges facing energy security worldwide is the need for stable, efficient and reliable transit. Energy transit is playing a growing role in global processes, requiring efforts at the national, bilateral, subregional, regional and international levels to build energy transportation systems and facilitate the trading of energy resources (see resolution 67/263). Without cross-border transport of fuel sources, many countries that do not have sufficient domestic resources would be unable to meet their own fuel demand. This is particularly true of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

8. Landlocked developing countries, as a group, are among the poorest of developing countries, with limited capacities and dependence on a very limited number of commodities for their export earnings. Lack of territorial access to the sea, remoteness and isolation from world markets have contributed to their relative poverty and substantially inflate their transportation costs (see A/CONF.202/3). The median landlocked country tends to incur transport costs 50 per cent higher than those of the median coastal country, and to have trade volumes that are 60 per cent lower.[3] High transit costs have become a restrictive barrier to trade for landlocked developing countries. The special needs of landlocked developing countries can be addressed, inter alia, by establishing and promoting efficient transit transportation systems that link those countries to international markets (see resolution 67/263), as well as by including a special focus on investing in the improvement of transit infrastructure, with the objective of reducing the cost of transit.

9. As a result of their geographic isolation and lack of fossil fuel endowment, small island developing States rely heavily on imported energy resources, which poses a number of capacity constraints and contributes to energy insecurity. Many small island developing States are net importers of fossil fuels, which are used as their primary source of energy to meet local demand. Exacerbating the insecurity are vulnerabilities associated with the impact of extreme weather variability, especially natural disasters, on the availability and distribution of energy. Furthermore, the sheer distance of transit imposes added costs on the energy trade. For small island developing States, as much as 15 per cent of gross domestic product can be expended on energy imports, with the per-unit cost of electricity being among the

[3] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), "Challenges and opportunities for further improving the transit systems and economic development of landlocked and transit developing countries" (UNCTAD/LDC/2003/8), p. 6.

highest in the world.[4] The increasing cost of imported fossil fuels represents a major impediment to the achievement of sustainable development and poverty eradication in small island developing States, and requires special attention within the energy transit framework.

10. Energy transit countries are also in a unique situation. They facilitate the conveyance or transportation of energy through their jurisdictions and into that of other countries, through pipelines, transmission lines, rail or ship. Such countries play a critical role since others depend heavily on them for access to energy. As transit countries, they have extensive influence on negotiating transit terms and conditions, including transit fees. The fees are an important incentive for providing reliable transit and for building related infrastructure. Such countries are home to multidimensional pipelines with extensive capacities and to storage facilities that are used to balance and regulate the flow of oil and gas from suppliers to markets. Building up the carrying capacity of transit countries is a critical factor to keeping pace with increasing global energy demand.

11. History has shown how the transit of oil and gas through pipelines can become the locus of important conflicts and disagreements, sometimes resulting in the cessation of throughput for shorter or longer periods of time. Halting energy flows is not beneficial to any party and often has an adverse impact on multiple other countries as well. This demonstrates that the negotiation of long-term contracts that address the interests of producing, consuming and transit countries is critical to long-lasting cooperation and amicable relations. International cooperation may play an important role in reducing the potential for conflicts and disagreements.

B. Treaties and agreements relevant to energy transit

12. There are a number of treaties and agreements that affect or regulate energy transit, directly and indirectly. Some have existed for decades while others have come into existence more recently. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade dates back to 1947, while the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Trade Facilitation was signed in 2013. Efforts to govern energy transit are continually evolving and improving.

13. Energy transit is relevant to the economic development of States, touching on issues such as the transit of goods and services, the facilitation of trade, the rights of landlocked States, and freedom of the high seas and transnational rivers. Each of those domains is addressed by customary international rules and international law, and is part of a wider concept of "freedom of transit".[5] Freedom of transit as a principle in international law is manifested as access to the sea for landlocked countries. Goods, means of transport and individuals should enjoy freedom of

[4] Brief prepared by the Technical Support Team of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme, entitled "Needs of countries in special situations: African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as the specific challenges facing middle-income countries".

[5] Danae Azaria, "Energy transit under the Energy Charter Treaty and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, *Journal of Energy and Natural Resources Law*, Vol. 27, Issue No. 4 (2009), pp. 559-596.

transit so as to have access to the sea.[6] In the energy transit context, the principle is extended to refer to freedom of access to energy resources and the movement of energy across borders.

14. The Energy Charter Treaty entered into force on 16 April 1998, developing from a recognized need to ensure that a commonly accepted foundation be established for developing energy cooperation between the States of the Eurasian continent. Today it has 52 signatories, with members far outside of Eurasia. The Treaty covers a broad and diverse range of countries, including energy producing, consuming and transit countries. The objective of the Treaty is to strengthen the rule of law on energy issues by creating a level playing field of rules to be observed by all participating Governments, thus minimizing the risks associated with energy-related investments and trade.

15. Regarding transit, the Treaty's existing provisions oblige its contracting parties to facilitate the transit of energy on a non-discriminatory basis consistent with the principle of freedom of transit. Article 7 of the Treaty states that contracting parties should encourage relevant entities to cooperate in modernizing the energy transport facilities necessary to the transit of energy materials and products; developing and operating energy transport facilities serving the area of more than one contracting party; mitigating the effects of interruptions in the supply of energy materials and products; and facilitating the interconnection of energy transport facilities.

16. Article 11 of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation and article 5 of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade both address freedom of transit and also exist as additional bodies of international law invoked in energy trade and transit issues. Article 5 of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade establishes that there "shall be freedom of transit through the territory of each contracting party, via the routes most convenient for international transit, for traffic in transit to or from the territory of other contracting parties. No distinction shall be made which is based on the flag of vessels, the place of origin, departure, entry, exit or destination, or on any circumstances relating to the ownership of goods, or vessels or of other means of transport".

17. Article 11 of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation states, inter alia, that "any regulations or formalities in connection with traffic in transit imposed by a Member shall not be applied in a manner that would constitute a disguised restriction on traffic in transit". It also contains provisions for faster and more efficient trade procedures, and for cooperation and coordination on formalities such as charges, legal requirements, and the practical operation of transit regimes.

18. There are uncertainties that arise from the provisions of each of the agreements. For example, WTO has different rules for trade in goods and trade in services. The distinction between trade in goods and trade in services is not always easy to apply in the energy sector and may lead to artificial distinctions.

19. Other opportunities for improving upon the agreements exist in relation to important questions such as the obligation to observe transit agreements, transit tariffs, coordination in the event of accidental interruption, reduction or stoppage of transit and conciliation of transit disputes.

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[6] UNCTAD, "Freedom of transit and regional transit arrangements", Trust Fund for Trade Facilitation Negotiations, Technical Note No. 8, January 2011.

C. Energy transit infrastructure

20. Energy transit infrastructure is crucial to the successful midstream phase of energy development. Energy transit is different from transit of most other goods; it is often grid-bound or stationary and thus capacity-restricted. In the transit of most goods, transported in ships, trucks, or railway cars through a common carrier infrastructure, the issue of capacity constraints can be solved easily as the goods can usually be stored. In those scenarios, the time/capacity factor does not adversely affect the transit. However, because energy transportation is capacity-restricted and energy is more difficult to store, the time and uninterrupted flow aspects matter.

21. Energy projects such as natural gas pipelines, electricity grids and oil tankers all require large upfront investments. Energy infrastructure costs are dominated by the capital costs of the investment and its financing. Construction of transportation pipelines and transmission grids is a substantial long-term investment with little room for flexibility; once constructed such transportation networks can only be used for the transport of specific energy products. Planning for energy transit infrastructure requires well-informed choices in its design and siting; such permanent infrastructure should be durable and resilient to climate risks.

22. The building of energy transit infrastructure may also have an adverse environmental impact. The land, material and energy intensive nature of pipelines and electricity grids can have ecological consequences, including habitat destruction and fragmentation. Conducting environmental impact assessments for such large-scale transboundary projects is always a substantial undertaking. Accordingly, environmental management is an important practice to include as part of international cooperation in the planning, construction and maintenance of transboundary infrastructure.

D. Energy trade

23. Trade in energy is a special type of international commerce. Trade in fossil fuels and electricity accounts for about 15 per cent of global merchandise trade (by value).[7] Because few countries have energy resources and all countries need them, trade in energy has been crucial to filling global energy needs. In many countries, energy markets have been liberalized so that energy products are increasingly subject to standard trading and market rules.

24. Trade in energy encompasses various aspects and issues of transnational trade, including trade in goods, trade in services, investment matters, intellectual property and subsidies. The most significant challenges related to energy trading stem from the fact that a significant part of the international energy trade takes place through fixed infrastructure, built specifically for the purpose of carrying hydrocarbons or electricity. However, WTO rules were not specifically designed to tackle issues arising from the trading of energy across borders through pipelines and grids. An issue that may arise with regard to the energy trade is how to distinguish between trade in energy goods versus energy services.

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[7] John Gault, "A word of introduction from the energy industry perspective", in *Global Challenges at the Intersection of Trade, Energy and the Environment* (Centre for Trade and Economic Integration, Switzerland, 2010), p. 9.

III. Issues relating to the reliable and stable transit of energy and possible modalities for international cooperation

A. Summary of the views and activities of Member States

25. It is in the common interest of Member States and multilateral organizations to ensure the security of energy supply, demand and transit, which are interdependent elements that are essential to securing a sustainable energy future. Many Member States have expressed their support for developing a stable and transparent framework for the trade and transit of energy and for greater international cooperation to support reliable and stable energy transit in the interest of all countries. The following paragraphs summarize the views and activities of Member States.

26. The Russian Federation actively promoted the modernization of the international treaty framework in the sphere of energy, proceeding from the assumption that energy transit was a matter of national sovereignty and was regulated by intergovernmental agreements. The efforts of energy producing, consuming and transit States must be consolidated to provide a collective answer to the modern challenges and threats related to energy. The Russian Federation affirmed that energy transit should not undermine the economic, environmental and energy security of the States involved, reiterating that the practicalities of energy transit through the territory of a given State were subject to national legislation. Furthermore, the Russian Federation indicated that, as far as transit issues were concerned, the available body of international law should be respected, including the Energy Charter Treaty, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (article 5) and the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation (article 11). The Russian Federation deemed it possible to have an exchange of views in the framework of the General Assembly on mutually acceptable international modalities for energy transit.

27. Nauru stated that it was a net importer of fossil fuels as the primary source for meeting energy demand and that reliable and stable transit of energy was therefore essential to it. The geographic isolation of Nauru from major supply markets created added energy transit costs, and has required high up-front investment and large economies of scale that have given rise to natural monopolies in the energy sector. Capacity constraints and energy insecurity were realities for Nauru. Building a viable international transit system for Nauru would require an analysis of energy supply and demand to determine the economic viability of such a system. Other conditions would include appropriate pricing and the consideration of long-term contracts. A reliable framework would also require non-discrimination, favourable treatment, facilitation of transit and political support. An uninterrupted flow of energy and effective dispute resolution would be imperative to a reliable framework. Nauru indicated that a transit protocol should be developed, with conditions for access, tariffs, taxes, right of way, approval procedures, licensing and standards all being integral elements.

28. Belarus described itself as a transit State that supported the uninterrupted transfer of energy throughout Europe. Belarus was also a hydrocarbon importer because domestic production did not meet internal demand. In that regard, Belarus was interested in establishing transparent and non-discriminatory transportation and transit of energy resources, and supported broad international cooperation with the goal of providing reliable energy transit to the international market. Belorussian organizations that engaged in the transport of energy resources were interested in

increasing the volume of oil transit through the territory of Belarus. All interested consumers should have access, without obstacles and on equal terms, to the services of the national oil transport system. The geographic position of Belarus between the regions that are the main consumers and producers of natural gas, and its existing natural gas transport system, defined the role of Belarus as a reliable and stable natural gas transit State. The feasible transit volume that passed through Belarus ranged from 54 to 57 billion m^3 per year. Belarus called upon all interested parties to consider once more the proposal for the construction of a second line of the Yamal pipeline through the territory of Belarus. Belarus was ready for international cooperation in the interest of supporting the reliable transit of electricity. In order to realize such transit, Belarus was implementing a series of technical measures to develop the necessary conditions for electricity grid equipment to work within the energy system. Belarus supported the development by the United Nations of an integrated energy agenda with the following elements: the development and adoption by the General Assembly of recommendations that address the development and transfer of renewable energy technologies; the development of a global database of technologies; the establishment of a multilateral fund to finance the development, transfer and application of modern energy technologies; and the creation of an international centre for the transfer of renewable energy technologies. Belarus called for an integrated energy agenda and a new strategic approach to finding effective solutions for energy issues. Such an energy agenda would be addressed on a systematic and consistent basis with key participation of Member States. It would serve as the central platform for decision-making on all the energy-related issues and questions currently not being addressed by the specialized agencies of the United Nations system. The energy agenda would also address problematic issues and challenges, and find solutions that would promote international cooperation.

29. Qatar recognized the importance of existing rules to manage international transit operations among all countries. The use of tools such as international law, treaties and agreements, should be based on the principles of transparency, accountability, objectivity and a balance between the cost of energy transit and services rendered. Qatar added that Governments should also have the right to defend their own corporations. In the near future, Qatar's Department of Energy and International Relations would set up meetings with the relevant State offices in Qatar to carry out energy transit negotiations. Qatar would also coordinate with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council to make suggestions to the Secretary-General of the Council on the issue of reliable and stable transit. Depending on the outcome, a meeting would be set up to discuss the framework, with the goal of achieving consensus among the Council members on the issue. In the meantime, the issue of reliable and stable energy transit could be discussed through the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Arab League, seeking contributions from member country experts on the issue. The discussion would focus on reaching a pan-Arab decision that would take into account the benefits of a cooperative relationship among Arab countries regarding energy transit. The process would be facilitated through preparation and research on the subject by the international organizations that specialize in the energy business and to which Qatar belonged, including the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the Gas Exporting Countries Forum. All member States involved could benefit and it would make for a united and clear position prior to discussing the issue at the United Nations.

30. Slovakia regarded the safe, secure and reliable transit of energy to be critical to the energy security of individual countries and regions. Given the geographical location and historical development of the main transit routes, Slovakia stated that it played an important role in the transit of oil, electricity and, especially, natural gas in Central and Eastern Europe. Its share of transit gas was also significant vis-à-vis the European Union. Given its high dependence on the import of energy goods from abroad, Slovakia was fully aware of the importance of regional cooperation, mainly within the frameworks of the Visegrad Group, the European Union and the Energy Charter Treaty. Regional cooperation could significantly contribute to improving the security of transit and deal with possible market obstacles, including trade and infrastructure issues. Slovakia was actively engaged in the European Union's internal energy market integration. Slovakia saw the benefits of Europe-wide network codes for electricity and gas market operation. To ensure future interoperability, a harmonized approach to the implementation of network codes in the region (i.e., building blocks for the real European Union energy market) were crucial. Harmonized implementation of gas network codes was part of the agenda of the Visegrad gas forum. Cooperation in the regional electricity sector took place within the Central Eastern European Electricity Forum. Slovakia was also actively involved in electricity market coupling with the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania. The initiatives were deemed to be successful examples of regional energy cooperation with added value for energy transit. The construction of missing infrastructure links was another important precondition for safeguarding the security of transit and increasing the security of energy supplies. Slovakia considered that the North-South gas and electricity corridors in Central and Eastern Europe were crucial. The realization of the priority corridor for oil supplies in Central Europe would benefit oil supply security. Major benefits in terms of gas supply security for Slovakia were realized through reverse flows with the Czech Republic and Austria, pipelines which were constructed with support from the European energy programme for recovery. Slovakia supported the standard process of reverse flow preparation in line with the European Union legislative rules, believing that ongoing market testing, also referred to as "open season", would provide a basis for enabling reverse flows in the technically shortest possible time frame. Further diversification of routes and sources would be important to ensuring security of supply in the European Union. However, it was of the utmost importance that the projects did not undermine the energy security of certain regions and countries and that the projects adhered to internal energy market rules.

31. Paraguay promoted the establishment of an agreement to ensure specific rules for the stable and reliable transit of energy products. The agreement would require energy products to be considered as merchandise of temporal entry through the territory of another party, excluding the payment of import or export taxes. In addition, the proposed agreement would require that the energy products that go through another party's territory receive the same treatment as those belonging to national actors of the transit country. Finally, Paraguay indicated that access to energy transport facility capacity that was available for transit use should be non-discriminatory.

32. Tajikistan acknowledged that access to modern and cost-efficient energy services was of fundamental importance for socioeconomic development, the eradication of poverty and hunger, the improvement of quality of life, the reduction of inequality and for meeting basic human needs. Making access to energy a priority

issue is key to the achievement of all Millennium Development Goals. Tajikistan considered it essential that the United Nations General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and UN-Energy enhanced their efforts to provide wider access to energy. Access to energy was especially urgent for poor countries and mountainous territories that were remote from major infrastructure. Tajikistan supported the "Sustainable Energy for All" initiative of the Secretary-General and General Assembly resolution 67/215, in which the Assembly declared 2014-2024 the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All. Along with ensuring reliable and sustainable access to energy, it was necessary to encourage, contribute to and invest in the growing share of renewable energy on a global scale, in the transfer of modern and advanced technologies, and in increased efficiency of energy supply and energy conservation. Tajikistan's hydropower potential of 527 billion kWh per year represented 4 per cent of the world's total. Currently, only 3.2 per cent of that potential had been developed. With efficient cooperation, Tajikistan's export capacity could reach 30 billion kWh by 2020. Developing that capacity would allow Tajikistan to ultimately reduce its impact on the environment and would also boost employment. Such a situation demanded that Tajikistan pay more attention to the construction of hydropower facilities for generating energy. In a consistent and planned manner, Tajikistan had been developing its energy potential based on the comprehensive development of renewable energy sources. All of Tajikistan's projects were being implemented transparently, taking into account the socioeconomic and ecological aspects of the sustainable development of a modern energy sector. Considering Tajikistan's potential in the production of renewable and environmentally clean electric power, the creation of technical opportunities for a regional electricity market was one of the most important issues for the electric power industry in the region. Establishing an electricity transport corridor between the energy surplus countries of Central Asia and the energy deficit countries of South Asia had been studied and found to be beneficial. Thanks to the support of the World Bank and the active participation of all interested countries, a feasibility study had been carried out for the "CASA-1000" project power transmission system between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The project was in the final stage of investor selection of investors preceding the start of the construction phase. The whole preparation process of the interregional energy bridge had been accomplished through the joint efforts of all participating countries. Implementation of this project undoubtedly would increase prosperity and security, and would accelerate the growth and expansion of trade among the countries of the region.

33. Turkmenistan regarded energy cooperation as being of particular importance. Turkmenistan had great resource potential, both on land and in the Turkmen sector of the Caspian Sea. The sustainable development of those resources was the basis for its energy security. Turkmenistan had a diversified energy supply system based on the routes from Turkmenistan to China, Iran (the Islamic Republic of) and the Russian Federation. Turkmenistan had intensified its activities to implement a Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline project. The implementation of the pipeline would be beneficial to all parties, from political, economic and social perspectives. Currently, work was under way on an internal east-west gas pipeline, approximately 1,000 km long. It would bring together the main gas fields in the country through a unified gas transportation system and significantly increase the export potential of Turkmenistan. Such infrastructure would significantly expand the possibility of diversifying the supply routes of Turkmen natural gas, as well as create an additional guarantee for reliable and stable export of energy resources to

international markets. Turkmenistan acknowledged that General Assembly resolution 67/263 provided the basis for global partnership in the energy sphere, taking into account the interests of energy resource producing, consuming and transit States. Achieving comprehensive security depended largely on ensuring energy security, which was one of the most important components of a stable world economy. With that in mind, the development of an international mechanism envisaging a set of guarantees in the sphere of global energy supplies was a task of paramount global importance. Moreover, Turkmenistan underscored the importance and necessity of joint work and coordinated efforts by all Member States to develop and adopt consolidated approaches to the solution of energy security issues. The establishment of a new universal international law toolkit by the United Nations was a key element of this process, which in Turkmenistan's view should consist of three major elements. First, there should be a multilateral United Nations document forming the legal basis for emerging relations in the international energy resource supply sphere. Leading international scientific institutions should be involved in the process. Second, a corresponding structure at the United Nations should be created to enforce implementation of the provisions of the above-mentioned document. The work of such a structure should be based on the principles of international law, which were incorporated primarily in the Charter of the United Nations. Third, an international database should be created for the collection and analysis of data on the implementation of the international obligations assumed by Member States. The database should be available to all energy dialogue participants and contain comprehensive information on the implementation of international commitments. Turkmenistan stated that the Assembly had welcomed the proposal of Turkmenistan to convene the first international meeting of experts on the energy security and transit issue. The meeting would be held in Ashgabat in late 2014. Turkmenistan invited the participation of experts from Member States and relevant United Nations system entities, including regional commissions and international and regional organizations, and the private sector.

B. Summary of inputs by bodies and organizations of the United Nations system

34. The work of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) on energy was designed to support the Sustainable Energy for All initiative of the Secretary-General and to facilitate efforts to secure affordable and sustainable energy supply for its Member States. An energy supply was considered secure if supplies remained robust in the short and long run in the face of political or technical disruptions and resource depletion. The Commission described energy security as collectively requiring investment, diversification of primary fuels, technology and system flexibility, in addition to trust, stable relationships, long-term arrangements and dialogue. The Commission asserted that finding, producing and delivering sustainable energy required investments that would only occur when appropriate framework conditions were in place. The Commission stated that the safe, reliable and efficient transit of energy was one prerequisite for investments to materialize, adding that the United Nations could facilitate the development of a new direction and framework at the international level. Safe and reliable transit of energy could not happen unless the global energy system and all of its moving parts — upstream, midstream and downstream — work together in an efficient and sustainable manner. The Commission had addressed the specific energy transit issues that had emerged

by placing them into three broad categories: the energy trade's reliance on fixed infrastructure; the conditions to make international projects viable; and political support. Some of the infrastructure-related issues included the significant up-front costs and large economies of scale, pathways controlled by incumbent companies, energy security-sensitive energy trade and capacity constraints. For international projects to be viable, there would have to be long-term contracts, reliable investment framework conditions, non-discrimination, non-interruption of energy flows, dispute resolution, conditions of access, tariffs and taxes, rights of way, approvals and licensing and standards. Political support had many important components, including the building of confidence and trust, the provision of regulatory frameworks, credit guarantees and loans, the creation of interfaces between different regulatory environments, the reconciliation of energy producing, consuming and transit countries' interests, and the balancing of geopolitical perspectives with common rules. The Commission stated that international cooperation should engage across all steps in the value chain (upstream/midstream/downstream), involve close and enduring public/private engagement in dialogue and in developing protocols and model agreements, and account for the interests of producing, transit and consuming countries. Like many other stakeholders, the Commission stated that there was a clear need for an ongoing forum to discuss existing and possible future energy security issues. If requested, the Commission could renew the energy security forum that was initiated at the Commission in 2003. Such a forum would include international experts, relevant intergovernmental agencies, industry groups and civil society. Informal sessions would be held on concerns that had been expressed to assess whether they were adequately covered by existing structures and legal instruments, whether they could be addressed by modification and adaptation of what already existed, or if another avenue were required. Informal working sessions would also be held to address the upstream, midstream and downstream segments. At the conclusion, a meeting of intergovernmental experts could be held to integrate and agree on recommendations to present to Member States.

35. One of the main objectives of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) was to facilitate consensus to promote regional cooperation in enhancing energy security and the sustainable use of energy in the Asia-Pacific. In 2013, the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum was the first intergovernmental ministerial conference on energy under the auspices of the United Nations. The meeting resulted in the adoption of a ministerial declaration and plan of action on regional cooperation for enhanced energy security, which touched upon the topic of reliable and stable energy transit. Participants acknowledged that enhanced energy trade was a powerful catalyst for strengthening intraregional cooperation among all stakeholders, including energy producing, consuming and transit countries. The forum also attached great importance to the establishment of an environment conducive to investment in production, transit and delivery infrastructure, and to trade facilitation policies in both primary energy resources and electricity. ESCAP member States agreed to cooperate on facilitating regional dialogue on energy in order to enhance cooperation among energy producing, consuming and transit countries; encouraging investment in developing and implementing projects for transportation of energy resources within subregions, including for power grids and oil and gas pipelines; promoting initiatives for regional energy connectivity, including those focused on cross-border energy infrastructure development, such as that for oil and gas pipelines and electricity

grids, including hydropower infrastructure, through the identification of possible options for an integrated regional power network, which could contribute to the development of an "Asian energy highway"; and extending cross-border power grids and increasing the efficiency of energy generation, transmission and distribution. In order to review and support the implementation of the ministerial declaration and the plan of action, ESCAP was establishing a multi-stakeholder annual energy dialogue to strengthen further energy cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, including cooperation on issues relating to the reliable and stable transit of energy.

36. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) stated that it had expertise on the role that climate information plays in energy trade and transit. Knowledge of climatological extremes (taking into account climate change implications) aided in planning permanent infrastructure that was resilient to climate risks, with adequate spare capacity and path redundancies. Also, climate information could help to create seasonal climate outlooks to support climate risk management for anticipating peaks and troughs in demand to optimize financial gains and reduce losses. Last, it analysed forward-looking trends to inform choices in the design and siting of energy generation schemes, particularly renewable energy. Climate information could be provided by specialized agencies and the national meteorological and hydrological services within the WMO. Since oil and gas might have to be transported by land and sea, weather and climate information was essential to the safety and cost-efficiency of such transportation. In that regard, WMO adhered to the main recommendations and conclusions of the final report of an ECE group of experts on climate change impacts and adaptation for international transport networks. In particular, WMO would like to stress the importance of weather and climate information in relation to transportation accidents involving tankers and trains that were associated with extreme events; the impact of ice, flooding and landslides triggered by rainfall, for example, on fixed-transit infrastructure, including transmission lines and pipelines; and the choice of facility locations, which subsequently determined transit requirements.

IV. Conclusion

37. The summaries provided by Member States and international organizations show their clear interest in further enhancing existing frameworks to focus specifically on reliable and stable energy transit. Whether through an annual energy dialogue, a new legal framework or protocol, an expert group or the enhancement of existing regimes, there is general consensus on the need to renew focus on the issue of energy transit security.

38. Within the existing energy transit framework, there is opportunity for more detailed rules on transit and for more comprehensive investment guidelines. Opportunities for enhanced international cooperation include measures to facilitate or promote investment in energy transit. Investment in and expansion of the transport network would help alleviate capacity constraints, reduce transport costs and enhance competition. International cooperation can also be strengthened by enhancing legal standards that address issues such as freedom of transit and the distinction between trade in energy goods versus trade in energy services.

39. Future dialogue may focus on developing enhanced transportation systems and pipeline networks at the international, regional and global levels. Other important

areas of cooperation are the diversification of resources, the diversification of energy transportation routes, the design of enhanced oil and gas pipelines using advanced technologies, the improvement of pipeline systems and the further development of pipeline networks and other energy infrastructure, including electricity grids. The initiatives can be advanced by formulating concrete international legal principles and norms, taking into account the experience gained by Member States and international organizations.

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Questions relating to information

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 68/86 B, provides highlights of recent communication campaigns of the Department of Public Information on issues such as sustainable development, the Millennium Development Goals, the question of Palestine, global action against racism, disarmament and the New Partnership for Africa's Development. The activities of the network of United Nations information centres, a key component of the Department's outreach in the field, are also reviewed. The report highlights the Department's traditional media-related products and services, the growth of social media, the progress made by its multimedia website and the activities of the United Nations News Centre. It also provides an update on the Department's outreach services, including the annual observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, activities related to the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme and relations with the creative community and non-governmental organizations. A summary of the Department's partnership with institutions of higher learning and research through the United Nations Academic Impact initiative is also highlighted. A separate section deals with the culture of evaluation.

* A/69/150.

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I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 88 of its resolution 68/86 B, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its thirty-sixth session and to the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of all recommendations and requests contained in that resolution. Accordingly, the Department submitted three reports for consideration by the Committee at its thirty-sixth session, held from 28 April to 9 May 2014 (A/AC.198/2014/2, A/AC.198/2014/3 and A/AC.198/2014/4). The deliberations of the Committee with regard to those reports are reflected in the report of the Committee on its thirty-sixth session (A/69/21).

2. The present report updates the information provided to the Committee on Information at its thirty-sixth session, and describes activities undertaken by the Department from March to September 2014 through its three subprogrammes: strategic communications services; news services; and outreach and knowledge services.

II. Strategic communications services

A. Social and development issues

3. The United Nations Communications Group task force, which is convened by the Department on a regular basis, continued to play a key role in coordinating, in an integrated and system-wide manner, messaging and outreach plans on the Millennium Development Goals, the post-2015 development agenda and climate change.

4. The Department played a key role in communications planning, message development and media and constituency outreach for the upcoming Climate Summit, to be held on 23 September 2014 to mobilize climate action and ambition as well as build support for a robust agreement at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2015.

5. Working with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and through the United Nations Communications Group, the Department launched a campaign entitled, "Time for Global Action" as the umbrella for the different initiatives within the United Nations system over 2014 and 2015. The campaign seeks to engage the media, decision-makers, the general public and other key stakeholders and to highlight the Organization's leading role in building momentum towards key decisions over the next year, in particular those related to climate change and the post-2015 development agenda.

6. The launch of the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2014* by the Secretary-General at the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in New York on 7 July 2014 was complemented by more than a dozen regional and national launches organized by United Nations information centres, as well as by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Nordic Representation Office. The Department issued press materials in the six official languages, coordinated

media outreach, events and interviews and, for social media, produced shareable infographics on each Goal together with special videos on the Millennium Development Goals as a whole.

7. To ensure timely and comprehensive media coverage, the Department led communications planning and organized a communications team for the upcoming third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be held in Samoa in September 2014. An information team from the Department has also provided support for the Internet Governance Forum, to be held in Istanbul, Turkey, in September 2014.

B. Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine

8. As part of its Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine, the Department held its annual International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East on 9 and 10 June 2014 in Tokyo, organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and hosted by the Tokyo-based Sophia University. The seminar, which was attended by media practitioners, policymakers and academics from Israel, the State of Palestine, Japan and beyond, focused on media-related dynamics related to the situation in the Middle East.

9. During the reporting period, the Department continued to promote various themes and messages developed in the context of the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (2014) using all communications channels including radio, television and photography, as well as online and social media platforms:

(a) The United Nations Information Centre in Ankara provided media services for an "International Meeting on the Question of Jerusalem", organized by the Department of Political Affairs and the Government of Turkey;

(b) The United Nations Regional Information Centre in Brussels supported the "Yalla Palestina" festival, jointly organized by the Association belgo-palestinienne and several non-governmental organizations, which was attended by 5,000 people;

(c) The United Nations Information Centre in Jakarta produces a monthly e-bulletin in Bahasa Indonesia, "Halo Palestina", based on material provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

C. Global action against racism

10. On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March), the Department stepped up its social media campaign, tying the Day to the Department's multilingual website, "Let's Fight Racism!", and highlighting messages from the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In addition, the Department created a special image for use on its social media platforms in the context of the global effort to eradicate racism in sports.

D. Annual commemoration of the Rwanda genocide

11. On the occasion of the twentieth annual commemoration of the International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda (7 April), the Department, in cooperation with the Permanent Mission of Rwanda, organized a series of events at United Nations Headquarters under the theme "Kwibuka: Remember, Unite, Renew", including the annual memorial ceremony, a panel discussion and a symposium. Two special exhibits were also on display to mark the occasion. In addition, the Department arranged and actively promoted a number of video interviews with United Nations officials and public figures on matters relating to genocide. Seventeen United Nations information centres organized 60 activities including candle-lighting ceremonies, exhibitions, and seminars. the United Nations Information Centre in Brazzaville briefed 1,500 high school students, while the Information Centre in Bujumbura organized a discussion and photo exhibition attended by 1,800 people. A former United Nations peacekeeper from Bangladesh who served in Rwanda was invited by the Information Centre in Dhaka to attend activities, including a poetry recitation and theatre presentation. The Information Centre in Jakarta marked the Day with a film screening and a panel discussion.

E. Nelson Mandela International Day

12. For the observance of the Nelson Mandela International Day (18 July), the Department worked closely with the Permanent Mission of South Africa and the Office of the President of the General Assembly in planning events at United Nations Headquarters, including an informal meeting of the General Assembly. In line with the "67 Minutes of Service (67 Minutes for Mandela)" campaign led by the Nelson Mandela Foundation, the Department also offered United Nations staff and the delegations of Member States in New York the opportunity to participate in a street-tree-care workshop organized in cooperation with the MillionTreesNYC citywide initiative. The Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations participated in the event.

F. International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

13. On 8 August 2014, to mark the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples (9 August), the Department promoted and provided coverage of the annual event organized by the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in cooperation with the NGO Committee on the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples under the overall theme, "Bridging the gap: implementing the rights of indigenous peoples".

G. New Partnership for Africa's Development

14. The Department continued to raise global awareness of and support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development through its magazine, *Africa Renewal*, and the Africa Renewal Online website (in both English and French). Working in close collaboration with the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, in April the

Department helped to organize the annual launch of the *Economic Report on Africa 2014* in New York, published by the Economic Commission for Africa. Following the launch, the Department interviewed the Special Adviser on Africa and the Executive Secretary of the Commission for the August edition issue of the magazine.

15. The April 2014 edition of the magazine carried stories on Africa's infrastructure, particularly on transport, energy and information and technology. The August edition featured stories on regional trade and Africa's trade relationship with its major economic partners.

16. In May 2014, the Department teamed up with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Agency and the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa to organize a panel discussion to mark Africa Day under the theme, "Transforming Africa's Agriculture for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods: Strengthening the African Union/United Nations Partnership for Tangible Impact". During the event, the Department distributed its special issue on agriculture to mark the African Union's declaration of 2014 as the Year of Agriculture and Food Security.

17. From March through June 2014, the Department successfully placed 20 articles, which were published 585 times in English and French in 160 media outlets in more than 30 countries, and also continued to increase its presence online to reach the growing African population with access to the Internet.

H. United Nations peacekeeping operations

18. From 5 to 9 May 2014, the Department, working closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs, organized a communications workshop in Entebbe, Uganda, for chiefs of public information at peacekeeping operations. The workshop brought together about 30 senior public information officers from the majority of the peacekeeping missions for several days of panel discussions, training and specialized presentations on key strategic communications issues.

19. During the reporting period, the Department was closely involved in planning, recruitment and backstopping for the public information component of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Four staff members of the Department were temporarily seconded to the Mission for that purpose.

20. In June and July 2014, two staff members of the Department visited the peacekeeping missions in Haiti, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire on field visits to support the public information components of the three missions. Representatives of the Department also conducted assessment visits to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) to support the work of the communications component of the missions.

21. The Department collaborated with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support to mark the 2014 International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, observed annually on 29 May. The theme was, "United Nations Peacekeeping: A Force for Peace, A Force for Change, A Force for the

Future". Events were held at United Nations Headquarters as well as at many United Nations information centres. A communications campaign on the Day highlighted efficiency, innovation, modernization, flexibility and partnerships. To honour Captain Mbaye Diagne, a Senegalese military officer who lost his life while serving in Rwanda, the United Nations Information Centre in Dakar held a special ceremony attended by his wife and children. The Information Centre in Nairobi, along with the Kenya National Defence Forces and the National Police and Prison Services, organized events at the United Nations Office at Nairobi for 400 guests. The Information Centre in Rio de Janeiro and MINUSTAH organized a Google hangout discussion, during which journalists engaged with two Brazilian peacekeepers based in Haiti.

I. Counter-terrorism

22. In the area of counter-terrorism, the Department provided communications support to the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force for the fourth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, creating and launching for the Task Force the Victims of Terrorism Support Portal (http://www.un.org/victimsofterrorism) in the six official languages.

J. Disarmament

23. To promote the activities of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, the Department collaborated with the Office of Disarmament Affairs and the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan in preparation for the observance of the International Day against Nuclear Tests (29 August), including the informal meeting of the General Assembly, scheduled to be convened by the President of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly on 10 September. The Department also worked closely with the Office on the newly established International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, including setting up its website in the six official languages.

K. Simultaneous online events and briefings held at United Nations information centres worldwide

24. The network of United Nations information centres continued to reach out to the public with key messages of the Organization through various communication tools.

25. To increase interaction among geographically dispersed offices, the Department launched a series of simultaneous online events and briefings at United Nations information centres worldwide. The initiative provided information centres and participating students, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and media with an opportunity to discuss United Nations issues with peers. The Information Centres in Accra, Antananarivo, Asuncion, Brazzaville, Bujumbura, Dar es Salaam, Harare, Lagos, Lima, Mexico City, Nairobi, Ouagadougou and Tunis, the Information Service in Vienna and the United Nations offices in Yerevan and Minsk participated in the events and briefings. A series of online media sessions were also arranged to brief journalists on the upcoming 2014 Climate Summit. The first session was held with Brussels-based media.

26. In promoting action for the environment, United Nations information centres mobilized their efforts around World Environment Day and climate change. Many promoted "A wish for the planet", an international writing and drawing competition co-organized with the estate of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and the International Organization of la Francophonie. The United Nations Information Centre in Ankara organized, with the European Union, a bicycle tour with the participation of 10,000 cyclists. The United Nations Information Centre in New Delhi joined NGO partners in a tree-planting drive in Srinagar, with the overall goal of planting a million trees within five years, and the United Nations Information Centre in Prague briefed the Senate on the Climate Summit.

27. For World Water Day, United Nations information centres organized a range of activities. The Information Centre in Dhaka, with the Department of Public Health and Engineering, among other partners, organized a national consultation on water with 200 participants, as well as a seminar and press conference. The Information Centre in Moscow, in coordination with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) held a discussion, involving 35 university students and United Nations experts, on the water situation worldwide, particularly in the Lake Baikal area. The Centre in Windhoek, in cooperation with the Namibia Water Corporation and Government ministries, organized drama performances and song competitions for students and an educational tour to water processing facilities. Water was the focus of newspaper supplement pages and was also brought to the attention of the public through a text-message campaign. The Information Centre in Beirut published articles on the weekly United Nations page of the daily newspaper, *Al Balad*, while the Information Centre in Tehran arranged interviews for the United Nations Resident Coordinator with several media outlets.

28. Many United Nations information centres organized events in commemoration of World Press Freedom Day (3 May). The United Nations Information Centre in Antananarivo, in cooperation with the World Wildlife Fund and the Ministry of Information, organized a debate on "The obstacles to the professionalism of current Malagasy journalists". With three major local television stations, the Information Centre in Beirut organized prime-time talk shows featuring United Nations officials and other participants. The Information Centre in Washington, D.C., with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and MINUSTAH, connected foreign and Haitian journalists by videoconference to discuss journalism in democratic societies.

29. The International Year of Family Farming was publicized by a number of information centres: acknowledging the vital role that family farming plays in eradicating hunger and providing food security, the United Nations Regional Information Centre in Brussels, in partnership with FAO and the European Union, screened the film "The Moo Man", followed by a question-and-answer session with one of the directors of the film, Andy Heathcote; the centre in Canberra launched the Year in rural Australia during the Cowra Festival of International Understanding, with the participation of farmers from the Cowra region; and the Information Centre in Windhoek collaborated with FAO on a live interview aired on "Good Morning Namibia".

III. News services

A. Social media

30. United Nations social media grew dramatically across multiple platforms in the last year, and the Department expanded the United Nations presence, tailoring its approach to regional and language audiences. For example, when the Secretary-General visited China in May 2014, a coordinated effort with UNDP on the Weibo website yielded remarkable interest in his visit. The posts on the United Nations Weibo site have been viewed 1.18 billion times and were reposted and cited by hundreds of traditional news media, including the Xinhua News Agency, China Central Television (CCTV) and *China Daily*. The United Nations Weibo site reached more than six million followers in June 2014. Weishi and Miaopai are two popular social video-sharing applications in China. The United Nations Weishi site was launched in May of 2014, and its Miaopai account was launched in June 2014. By end of July, uploaded videos to the Weishi site had prompted more than 7.45 million views, while uploaded videos to the Miaopai site recorded over 3.25 million views.

31. The expertise of the Department's language teams has been sought by other United Nations offices, funds and programmes to reach greater audiences on social media platforms, especially in all six official languages. These joint social media initiatives include World Radio Day organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the *State of the World's Children* report, published by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). In the lead-up to the launch of the 2014 *Human Development Report*, the Department collaborated with UNDP to organize a series of live interviews using social media to generate interest in the principal issues covered by the report. The United Nations French-language Twitter account took part in a live call-in chat, in which more than 2 million viewers were reached; similar results were obtained through the Chinese- and Spanish-language chats.

32. The Department has redoubled its efforts to work collaboratively across social media accounts. The United Nations News Centre team routinely draws on the Twitter account of the Spokesperson of the Secretary-General and on information from the main United Nations account to supplement information being distributed to different audiences. During the reporting period, the Twitter and Facebook accounts of the English news portal grew by over 100 per cent, to almost 110,000 followers and 300,000 fans. A significant difference in approach was the effort being made to share visuals like infographics, photos and videos to filter and simplify information catering to the demands of the social media audience. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the steady growth of the French-language Facebook and Twitter accounts; the former had 100,000 followers as of mid-April 2014, a three-fold increase over April 2013. In May 2014, the Arabic-language Facebook account reached a milestone of 100,000 followers, and it is expected to reach 140,000 followers by September.

33. The audience of the United Nations channel on YouTube (www.youtube.com/unitednations), which is maintained by the Department, has increased steadily, with the number of video views in all languages exceeding 10 million and the number of subscribers to the channel growing to more than 52,000. Partnerships with United Nations agencies worldwide yielded concrete returns, with about 380,000 videos viewed on the United Nations YouTube channel in French. The Spanish-language

YouTube account has attracted a loyal following, and is expected to have more than half a million views by September 2014. By redoubling efforts to engage younger audiences in the Arab world, the newly created YouTube account in Arabic has made a noticeable mark in profiling United Nations activities in the region.

B. Radio, television and the Internet

34. The growth of the audience accessing United Nations information online has grown from 154 million (2010-2012) to 280 million page views (2013-2014), illustrating the expansion of visitors to the United Nations website in all languages. One reason for the dramatic increase in page views in 2014 is the marked upswing in the use of the Russian-language websites from March onwards, while Spanish-language websites have also registered an increase, with some 6 million page views between March and the end of June. Meanwhile, visitors to the Russian-language United Nations News Centre portal alone have climbed significantly, with over half a million page views between March and June 2014.

35. Integrated editorial planning and coordination between the Department's news and media producers working across platforms led to a high number of interviews, news and features by the United Nations News Centre and United Nations Radio teams, with increased profiles on the United Nations website of senior officials speaking on issues such as Iraq, Ukraine, the Syrian Arab Republic and chemical weapons, the situation in the Central African Republic and South Sudan. More news teams have been invited to major conferences so that dedicated, multimedia reporting from the venues of such meetings, funded by the conference organizers, bring depth, diversity, prominence and immediacy to the issues. In April 2014, news teams from the Department attended and covered the World Urban Forum in Medellin, Colombia, and the United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi in June. News teams will also provide coverage of the third International Conference on Small Islands Developing States in Samoa in September 2014.

36. Intensive efforts have been made to establish partnerships with agencies to ensure sharing of video and photo content from major initiatives, flagship report launches, field missions and interviews with senior officials and to pursue collaboration in the creation of news pages. For example, the United Nations News Centre and United Nations Radio have worked together to create a landing page in English and French for news with stories, video, audio and photos around the events leading up to the review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+20) which will take place at the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2015. By repurposing content and working with counterparts in the funds and programmes, the Department's news teams are able to draw attention to and create a multiplier effect, highlighting the compelling stories on peacekeeping and human rights, and on themes such as climate change and the post-2015 development agenda.

37. United Nations Radio has initiated creative partnerships to harness the power of joint collaborations. For example, the Chinese Unit has approached China National Radio to link up with their live prime-time news programme on issues of common interest, including statements of the Secretary-General and meetings of the Security Council. A similar collaboration has been explored with Radio Beijing and Radio Shanghai. Portuguese Radio has secured a partnership with the second largest

private Portuguese television station, TVI, with a weekly story on their live news programme; and collaboration with *The Huffington Post* and *Marie Claire* magazine in Brazil will lead to stories being carried regularly by both outlets.

38. A partnership with the call-to-listen platform AudioNow provides displaced and hard-to-reach ethnic audiences around the world with free access to United Nations Radio and other United Nations audio content by calling a domestic number from a mobile or land line. Operational as of 2014 in Brazil, South Africa, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United States, listeners can dial in to United Nations news, features and live coverage in eight languages.

39. The Department is in the process of creating a new look and content management system for the United Nations website and its supporting second-level pages, as well as for its meetings coverage and audiovisual websites. In a first step in improving its technological infrastructure, the Department, with the support of the Office of Information and Communications Technology has completed the necessary code improvements required to migrate key Department-managed websites to the latest web-server technology, including the Secretary-General's website, the media accreditation website and the United Nations system calendar of media events website.

40. In addition to creating and launching the Victims of Terrorism Support Portal in the six official languages for the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force in the first half of June (see para. 22 above), the Web Services Section has revamped the United Nations and climate change and the 2014 Climate Summit sites, which are now mobile-responsive. In addition, the website for the Meetings Coverage Section has been redesigned (see www.un.org/press) and transferred to a new platform. A redesigned website for the Security Council sanctions committees will be launched later in 2014. For the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, the Department has prepared a site for the general debate in English and French and a new website for the use of the incoming President of the General Assembly. On the heels of last year's success in producing an online-only version of the press kit for the sixty-eighth session of the Assembly (http://www.un.org/en/ga/68), a pdf and scannable version for handheld mobile devices was produced in the six official languages.

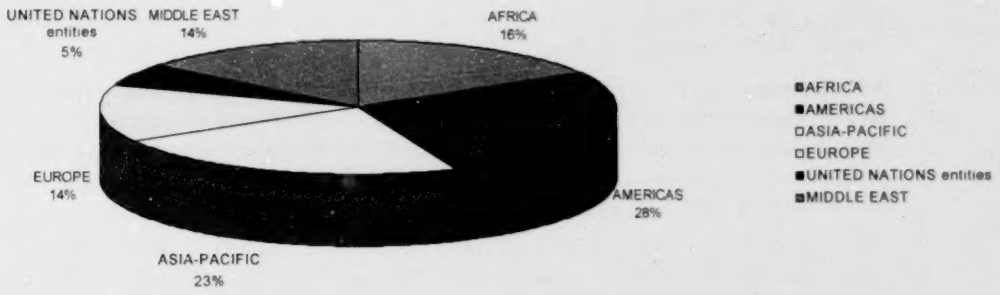
41. United Nations Television has also expanded its collaborative efforts by working with partners to produce video products on priority issues, including a series of eight stories highlighting the eight Millennium Development Goals. The monthly flagship programme, *21st Century*, is now being produced in language versions, with subtitles rather than being dubbed, in line with current media standards. Successful partnerships continue with TV5 Monde for the French-language version and with the China Business Network for the Chinese-language version, while partners are being sought for the other official languages. During this period, the Department has continued to produce *UN in Action*, a series of three to five minute features in the six official languages. A popular abridged series of two-minute video pieces entitled *UN Stories* are produced for the web in the six official languages. These stories are regularly used by media outlets, by the United Nations News Centre and United Nations Radio on their websites and are shared using the United Nations Facebook and Twitter accounts.

42. During the reporting period: United Nations Television producers released a number of stories on key issues on the Organization's agenda, including climate

change and the Millennium Development Goals, and are producing a series on the work of the special rapporteurs appointed by the Human Rights Council; a successful video release of the Secretary-General's message on World Autism Awareness Day garnered over 30,000 views; news-driven short videos for the home page of the United Nations were turned around quickly; and the United Nations News portal's weekly round-up video, News this week, continued to provide a concise, visual encapsulation of the range of the Organization's work for online audiences.

43. UNifeed, the flagship daily television newswire service, distributed 531 broadcast-quality stories to hundreds of television networks around the world through the Associated Press, Eurovision and Reuters from March to mid-June 2014. These stories reached approximately 200 broadcast users per month through the UNifeed website. Half of the news stories originated from United Nations Television in New York and Geneva, with the remaining half contributed by over 30 agencies, funds, programmes and peacekeeping missions.

Figure I
UNifeed clients by region
(Percentage)



44. Among the most popular stories were an exclusive from South Sudan on the meeting between the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, and opposition leader Riek Machar, and exclusive footage on the massacre in Bentiu, South Sudan, in April 2014, where hundreds of civilians were killed. The images made headline news around the world. Other examples of coverage during the reporting period included meetings of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the seventh session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

45. The Department continued to improve and expand the ability of the Organization's live and on-demand webcast services to reach a global audience in all six official languages on multiple web platforms, including wireless mobile devices. The extended webcast coverage of Security Council meetings and other breaking news events has contributed to a dramatic increase in global viewership. Thousands of archived videos are now available on demand.

46. In addition, the Department facilitates coverage, through its website, of the meetings of the Human Rights Council and press briefings at the United Nations

Office at Geneva. The Department has also provided webcast coverage for major United Nations conferences, including the World Urban Forum, organized by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in Medellín, Colombia (April 2014) and the sixth Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in Bali, Indonesia (August 2014), and it will provide coverage of the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in Samoa (September 2014).

47. The United Nations Television cable channel continued to broadcast live events from the United Nations and pre-produced material 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The channel also aired programmes in various official languages of the Organization, some subtitled and others in original soundtracks.

C. Press and photography coverage

48. Between 1 March and the end of September 2014, the Meetings Coverage Section produced 2,284 press releases (8,382 pages) in English and French. About 25 per cent of that output (529 press releases) consisted of summaries of the meetings of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as of their subsidiary bodies and the substantive commissions. In addition, 1,459 press releases contained statements, remarks and messages from the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General, as well as material from other United Nations offices and departments.

49. Demand for photography services continued to grow during the reporting period. Between March and June, United Nations Photo covered close to 900 events at Headquarters, as well as the official travel of the Secretary-General. Thus far in 2014, close to 4,000 images have been published on the website, and an additional 17,000 images have been added to the United Nations Photo Library.

50. Social media streams continued to be popular with the public: United Nations Photo had over 8.6 million accumulated views on Flickr, over 73,000 "likes" on Facebook, and more than 45,000 followers on Twitter, and the new United Nations Instagram platform already has close to 58,000 followers.

51. Efforts to make digitized historic photographs available to the public continued. During the reporting period, more than 500 such images, retouched, with captions verified and edited, were published on the United Nations Photo website, including over 100 photos on the Group of 77 and China, in support of its fiftieth anniversary exhibition. The Photo Library handled over 3,300 requests from Member States, the media, publishers and the general public. Over 68,500 high-resolution photographs were distributed to clients through the Photo Library or made available on the website.

52. In September 2014, in cooperation with an NGO partner, a United Nations photo exhibition is planned in Cologne, Germany, at "Photokina 2014", the world's largest photographic and imaging fair. To mark the upcoming seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, there will be a travelling exhibition on the history and the work of the Organization on the theme "We the Peoples".

53. Between January and August 2014, the Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit processed over 1,000 permanent accreditations and over 1,800 temporary press accreditations in New York. It is expected that the Unit will process between 1,500

and 2,000 requests in the month of September. The Unit provided information and logistical assistance for more than 350 stakeouts and press briefings and assisted with the media coverage of more than 100 bilateral meetings with the Secretary-General. In addition, to alert members of the press and other key partners about events at Headquarters, the Unit, working with the Media Documents Centre, promoted events via e-mail and through the Department's Twitter account.

IV. Outreach and knowledge services

A. International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

54. Working in close collaboration with the Caribbean Community and the African Union, the Department organized a series of activities to mark the annual observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The theme of the 2014 commemoration, "Victory over Slavery: Haiti and Beyond", paid tribute to the fight against slavery in nations around the world, marking, in particular, the 210 years since the establishment of Haiti as an independent State. The "Remember Slavery" programme now organizes activities throughout the year, which in 2014, included the following:

(a) A solemn commemorative meeting of the General Assembly featuring a keynote address by the UNESCO Special Envoy for Haiti, and a performance by Haitian artist Emeline Michel;

(b) A briefing for NGOs on the theme of the commemoration, webcast live, during which panellists discussed the various aspects of victories over slavery;

(c) A global student videoconference connected 500 students at Headquarters to students in Haiti, Spain and Senegal, with English-French interpretation;

(d) A multilingual film festival, featuring films related to slavery and its legacy, was organized in partnership with the African Burial Ground National Monument, the New York African Film Festival and the International Organization of la Francophonie. The festival concluded in September with a round-table discussion on the representation of slavery in film, scheduled to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the UNESCO "Slave Route" project. Events took place at Headquarters and other New York venues sponsored by the Permanent Missions to the United Nations, as well as at a number of United Nations information centres;

(e) A concert with the Cameroonian UNESCO Artist for Peace Manu Dibango, organized in partnership with the International Organization of la Francophonie;

(f) An exhibition showcasing the Haitian revolution and the proposed Permanent Memorial at the United Nations in Honour of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Trade, in partnership with the Nantes Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery and the architect Rodney Leon.

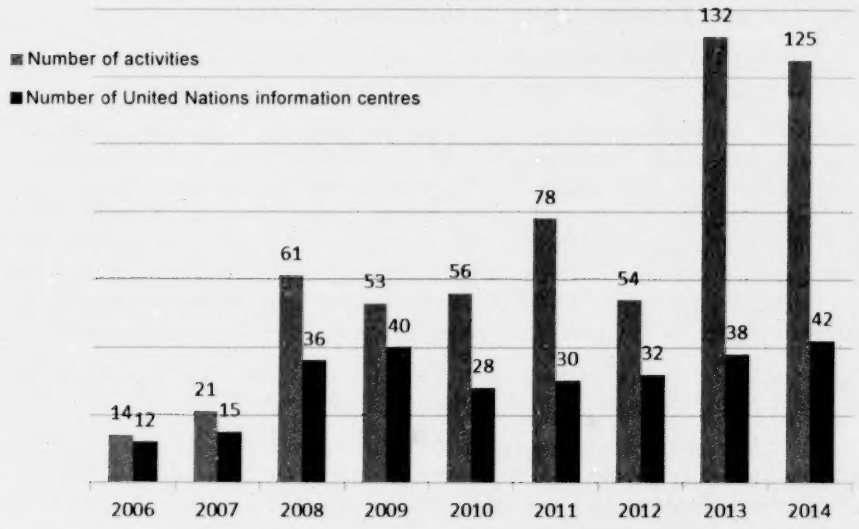
55. The theme of the 2014 commemoration was memorialized in campaign products available in the six official languages, as well as in Haitian Creole, Kiswahili and Portuguese.

56. A website in the six official languages, including the list of events that were webcast live, and a strong social media presence complemented the outreach activities. Commemorative events were also organized by 15 United Nations information centres.

B. The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme

57. On 28 April 2014, the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme, in partnership with the Permanent Mission of Israel and the World Jewish Congress, organized a panel discussion to examine ways to illustrate the universal lessons of the Holocaust through the medium of art. Teachers and students from 33 educational institutions were provided with online tools to help them explore the history of music and films published during the Holocaust, as well as contemporary ballets and novels on the subject. On 2 June 2014, in partnership with the Department's model United Nations programme and the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, the Programme expanded its outreach to youth by organizing the first model United Nations simulation on the Holocaust and genocide prevention at the Bronx High School of Science. As part of an outreach initiative in Morocco, briefing programmes were conducted in French and English for high school students, including in partnership with a student group, the Mimouna Club.

Figure II
Number of Holocaust remembrance activities organized per year by the United Nations information centres



C. Youth and educational outreach

58. On 13 June 2014, in advance of the International Day of Peace (21 September), the Secretary-General gave a 100-day countdown message. The theme for the 2014

International Day, "The right of peoples to peace", recognizes the thirtieth anniversary by the General Assembly of the Declaration on the Rights of Peoples to Peace, and highlights the "Rights Up Front" initiative. The commemoration at Headquarters will include a ringing of the Peace Bell, followed by an observance involving students, the Secretary-General and United Nations Messengers of Peace. The Department is working with civil society partners around the world to help raise awareness of the Day through a number of concerts, including a website and campaign materials in the six official languages.

59. Support for model United Nations programmes continued, with workshops held for university students and student leaders. In June, the Department conducted workshops at the international model United Nations organized by the World Federation of United Nations Associations in Rome. In August, the Department partnered with UNDP China in a model United Nations conference in Beijing and conducted training sessions for student leaders and participants. Workshops are planned in Qatar and Japan before the end of 2014. Work on the translation of the official model United Nations preparation guide in the six official languages continued.

D. United Nations Academic Impact initiative

60. The United Nations Academic Impact initiative, in association with ELS Educational Services Inc., successfully concluded an international essay writing contest for college and university students on the role of multilingualism in a globalized world, with contestants invited to submit essays in one of the six official languages of the United Nations that is not the student's mother tongue and/or principal medium of instruction. On 27 June 2014, 60 winners, 10 in each language, participated in a multilingual Global Youth Forum on the principles of the initiative in the General Assembly Hall, marking the start of the seventieth anniversary celebration of the founding of the United Nations. Almost 4,000 people participated in some phase of the contest; participating students were from 128 countries representing every part of the world.

61. During the reporting period, the United Nations Academic Impact initiative hosted several of its regular outreach programmes, including "Classroom Conversations" (19 June, using the massive open online courses) in cooperation with the State University of New York; "Let's Skype It" (16 May, on employment opportunities at the United Nations) with the European School of Management and Technology; and one in a series of "CFR@UNAI" talks (16 July, on fracking) with the Council on Foreign Relations. During the same period, the initiative also launched a new website, now available in the six official languages (https://academicimpact.un.org).

E. Engagement with youth

62. The Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth continued to increase outreach to youth and the promotion of youth participation within the United Nations system. Having built a strong working relationship with different United Nations agencies, governments, youth organizations, civil society, academia and media stakeholders, the Envoy has enhanced the position of young people within and outside the United

Nations system, while supporting the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth. The Plan includes the formation of a global partnership for youth as part of the post-2015 development agenda (#GPY2015), a global crowdsourcing initiative and the launch of the "Global Call on Youth: Prioritizing Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda", reflecting an emerging global consensus on concrete proposals for target areas on youth development. The Envoy has also continued to promote youth priorities through traditional and new media outlets, in coordination with regional and national entities, to support the implementation of quality national youth policies and to host and attend numerous youth events around the world while advocating a strong youth agenda at all levels.

F. Sales and Marketing Section

63. During the reporting period, the Department published a total of 174 titles and acquired publications in the six official languages in both print and digital formats. The Department continued to promote United Nations publications using social media platforms: the number of followers of United Nations Publications on Twitter reached 95,000 and Facebook "likes" are over 25,000.

64. The United Nations Development Business online programme has engaged new regional partners in order to reach companies and businesses in areas that are currently underrepresented among its subscribers. It is also working with institutions supporting women-owned businesses interested in public procurement projects.

65. In preparation for the move into the renovated General Assembly Building, the United Nations Bookshop has been working to design a modern, consumer-friendly selling environment. A review and redesign of merchandise is ongoing, with the expectation of better quality products and increased revenue.

G. Publications and editorial

66. In its first issue of 2014, the *UN Chronicle* marked the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Group of 77 and China. The dedicated edition was published in English and French in print, as an e-publication and online in May 2014. A Spanish translation has been made available on the magazine's website. Print copies were distributed at the commemorative summit on the fiftieth anniversary of the Group of 77 and China in June 2014. The information centres report that they place high value on print copies, and in a 2012 survey, 70 per cent of the centres responded that they most often read print copies of the *UN Chronicle*. Moreover, 71 per cent responded that the online version was either "easily accessible" or "accessible" at their location. The Sales and Marketing Section will continue to print the magazine for paid subscribers in English and French.

67. The Arabic version of *Basic Facts about the United Nations 2014*, to be published in September, is being made possible through a financial contribution from the United Arab Emirates. In June, the Department initiated a volunteer project with Shanghai International Studies University to translate the publication into Chinese by early 2015.

68. The 2009 edition of *Yearbook Express*, which contains the chapter introductions of the corresponding *Yearbook of the United Nations* in all six United

Nations official languages, was published in April on the *Yearbook's* new website (http://unyearbook.un.org).

69. In April, the Department released a free updated version of the iOS application "United Nations Calendar of Observances", with content in the six official languages and in Bahasa Indonesia. The additional language version was facilitated through collaboration between the United Nations Volunteers online volunteering service and by the United Nations information centre in Jakarta. Work on an Android application is under way.

H. Dag Hammarskjöld Library

70. Some Permanent Missions have reported that they face a challenging information environment, with limited resources and increased staff turnover. With this in mind, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library works to level the playing field by providing, through its "United Nations Member States on the Record" website (www.un.org/depts/dhl/unms), information on how Member States have spoken or voted. The Library has also undertaken a special project showcasing the history of Kenya at the United Nations on the anniversary of its independence and membership in the Organization. In addition, the Library supports the Permanent Missions through training and customized information and research support. High-quality information sources are made available online to the Permanent Missions, free of charge, through subscriptions to the Library. The Library's services have recently become faster and easier to use through the launch of a one-stop desk, which offers a first response within one hour. The Library has also piloted new self-service research guides on current topics.

71. While most United Nations documents since 1993 are available digitally, many millions of documents that remain in paper form are safeguarded by the Library. In partnership with the United Nations Library in Geneva, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library continued to digitize this information. The work is urgent, as some documents are beginning to disintegrate. A partnership with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, with the Department's contribution funded by Qatar, should accelerate digitization in the coming year. The Library is also developing a digital repository to preserve and make United Nations knowledge accessible in digital formats.

I. Relations with non-governmental organizations and advocacy

72. The sixty-fifth annual Department of Public Information/NGO Conference, entitled "2015 and Beyond: Our Action Agenda" will take place at Headquarters from 27 to 29 August 2014. Organized in partnership with civil society, the Conference will bring together a broad range of global civil society organizations, constituencies and campaigns in the lead-up to the Secretary-General's Climate Summit and the opening of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. The landmark conference will provide the 1,800 representatives from NGOs from around the world with an important opportunity to inject their opinions into the discussion of an ambitious and successful post-2015 development agenda.

73. The regular briefings for the NGO community, available via webcast, has remained the chief conduit of regular engagement. A new call for proposals for

NGO-led sessions has resulted in eight NGO sessions being organized around priority areas for the Organization. During the reporting period, the United Nations Radio Language Units covered a number of briefings in various languages, including Arabic, English, French, Kiswahili, Portuguese and Spanish.

J. Outreach to the creative community

74. The Secretary-General's "Sustainable Energy for All" initiative was the inspiration for a partnership with the NBC television series "Revolution", which depicts a future world without power. An "end card", providing information on the initiative, appeared at the end of the series finale in May, which was seen by 6 million viewers in the United States. Throughout the second season, the Department collaborated on social media outreach on the issues raised in the show among its fan base.

75. In May 2014, the Department facilitated the filming, at the United Nations, of the SundanceTV reality series "Dream School". The series follows struggling teenagers and matches them with teachers and celebrity mentors with the aim of helping them to overcome various challenges. In the episode filmed in the Trusteeship Council Chamber, a professor from Columbia University led a discussion on key United Nations themes. The series will air in the third quarter of 2014 in the United States.

76. In June 2014, world-renowned violinist Midori performed a mini concert with a youth quartet, followed by an interactive discussion about her role as a United Nations Messenger of Peace at an event organized for staff at Headquarters. At the event, Midori announced that she would support the "Every woman, every child" initiative and the work of UN-Women to end violence against women and girls.

77. The Department has partnered with the ongoing "Free and Equal" campaign of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and enlisted the support of Film Independent, a non-profit arts foundation, to launch the "Free and Equal" global film series, a collection of documentary films that explore the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people in different parts of the world. The series, which was launched at the Los Angeles Film Festival on 15 June, will be made available to United Nations information centres and other United Nations offices in support of the campaign.

K. Visitors' Services Section

78. At Headquarters, Visitors' Services organized guided tours, briefings and programmes for groups. Still located at a swing space location, and subject to stricter security measures, guided tours nevertheless attracted an estimated 82,000 visitors during the period under review. Tours were offered in the six official languages, as well as in German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese and Swedish. The Section is developing the new tour route which will be introduced once tours return to the newly renovated General Assembly Building.

79. In the period under review, 372 briefings in English, Chinese, French, German, Japanese and Russian were arranged, reaching some 27,900 participants. The Public Inquiries Unit responded to 4,200 communications and distributed 200 educational kits.

80. The Visitor Centre launched its redesigned website (http://visit.un.org) in April. The site is currently available in Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, with Arabic being developed. During the period under review, the website had about 215,000 visits and 740,000 page views. The Centre's Facebook page had some 10,000 followers.

81. Guided tours are offered at all four headquarters duty stations (Geneva, Nairobi, New York and Vienna). In Geneva, guided tours were offered in English and French as well as in 15 other languages, including official languages. Vienna offered guided tours in English, German, Hungarian, Slovak and Slovenian, as well as 10 other languages, including official languages. Nairobi offered guided tours in English, French and Kiswahili.

L. Reham Al-Farra Fellowship Programme

82. In 2014, the Reham Al-Farra Fellowship Programme, which is open to journalists and broadcasters from 33 countries, will take place in New York, from 8 September to 3 October. Fifteen young journalists, representing media organizations from Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Colombia, Ethiopia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Pakistan, the Republic of Moldova, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uganda and Viet Nam, have been invited to participate.

M. Knowledge solutions and design

83. The deleGATE website was migrated by the Office of Information and Communications Technology to a new platform, Drupal, a standard for websites at the United Nations. In keeping with this trend, iSeek, the United Nations Intranet, was also migrated in June. The new platform has increased the Department's ability to respond to the needs of content providers and users of both sites, including by allowing content providers to add graphics, photographs, video and audio to their pages, as well as allowing users to comment on stories published on the sites. iSeek published 649 stories, in both French and English, 318 (49 per cent) of which were global in nature.

84. The Graphic Design Unit continued to support Organization-wide print and electronic products for publications and for outreach campaigns by offering a complete creative service. During the reporting period, the team produced about 305 products, most of which were created in the six official languages. The Unit also produced branding graphics for the 2014 Climate Summit, the twentieth commemoration of the Rwanda genocide, 2014 transatlantic slave trade remembrance, the concert organized by the President of the General Assembly "2015 and Beyond", the sixty-fifth annual Department of Public Information/NGO Conference, children in armed conflict and the 2014 International Day of Peace, as well as the visual identity for the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations.

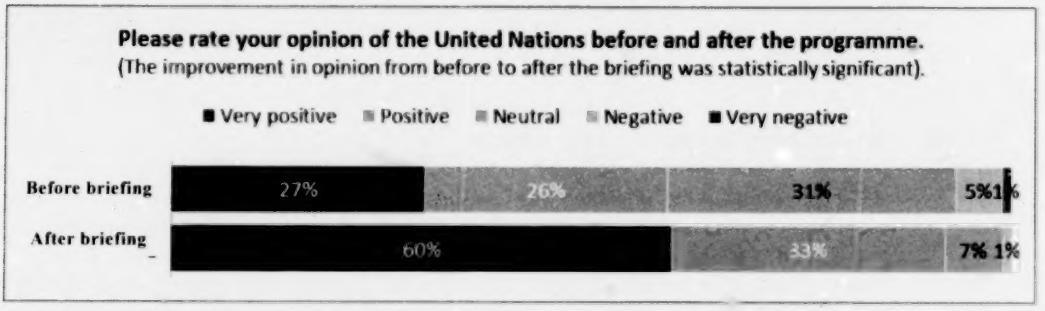
V. Strengthening the culture of evaluation

85. The Department maintains its commitment to a culture of evaluation, with the objective of enhancing the effectiveness of its products and activities. The Evaluation and Communications Research Unit conducts evaluations for the Department and provides technical support to programme managers in conducting their self-assessments. It also ensures the Department-wide alignment of websites, social media and other metrics for monitoring and reporting purposes. The Unit continues to support the social media taskforce, including through content, performance and risk management tools.

86. The Unit provided an analysis of briefings and outreach activities conducted by the network of United Nations information centres in 2013. Based on surveys conducted by the information centres, it was found that these programmes successfully raised awareness and support for the Organization: almost 90 per cent of participants stated that programmes provided by the information centres improved their understanding of the United Nations. In addition, the programmes had a significant impact on improving the participants' opinion of the Organization, as indicated in figure III below.

Figure III

Change in opinion of the United Nations among participants in briefings organized by the United Nations information centres



Source: 2013 surveys by United Nations information centres (3,536 responses from 48 information centres).

87. The Department, through the Evaluation and Communications Research Unit, provided technical assistance and guidance to the comprehensive review of Secretariat websites and their respective language(s), as requested in resolution 67/292, the most recent General Assembly resolution on multilingualism. The results of the inventory will be available in the third quarter of 2014.

88. The Department is undertaking a review of the United Nations Intranet (iSeek) for the purpose of utilizing user and non-user feedback in the redesign of the platform, which is scheduled for the end of 2014. In addition, the Unit is evaluating the communications products and activities for the post-2015 development agenda and the Summit on Climate Change in September 2014. The evaluations will include media monitoring and analysis of traditional media outlets, as well as analysis of online tools and social media, broadcast products and participants' feedback from the sixty-fifth Department of Public Information/NGO Conference. Results are expected in the fourth quarter of 2014.

VI. Conclusion

89. **As the present report was being prepared, the United Nations began the global commemoration of its seventieth anniversary year, with the theme "Strong United Nations, Better World". The strength of the Organization ultimately depends upon the energies invested in it by the peoples of the world, whom it serves. To that end, the Department of Public Information strives to reach people in a language that they understand, using words, images and ideas that tell the story of the United Nations that is often untold, while convening and engaging with as wide as possible a body of experience and knowledge in order to continually enrich and advance that story. As the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly ushers in a year of global action, the Department will continue to pursue this core mission.**

90. **The General Assembly is requested to take note of the present report.**

United Nations A/69/311

General Assembly

Distr.: General
14 August 2014

Original: English

Sixty-ninth session
Item 19 (e) of the provisional agenda*
Sustainable development: implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

Implementation of the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010-2020)

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 62/195, declared 2010-2020 the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification. The present report is prepared pursuant to resolution 64/201, in which the Assembly designated the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa as the focal point for the Decade, called for the implementation of the Decade in collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders and United Nations entities and requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the Decade at its sixty-ninth session. The report highlights the initiatives undertaken by the secretariat of the Convention, including efforts to carry out activities collaboratively with Member States, a range of stakeholders and other United Nations entities. Activities and initiatives to implement the Decade, with the objective of enhancing awareness of desertification, land degradation and drought issues, have included the organization of global and regional launches of the Decade; side events at various conferences; publications; web-based outreach; and support to the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought and other special events and activities.

* A/69/150.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/201, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its sixty-ninth session on progress made in implementing the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010-2020).

II. Background

2. Deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation of desertification in all regions, particularly in Africa, and its far-reaching implications for the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, in particular eradicating poverty, and taking into account the success of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification in raising awareness regarding desertification, land degradation and drought, the Assembly, by its resolution 62/195, declared the decade 2010-2020 as the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification.

3. Responding to the call by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa at its ninth session (see decision 30/COP.9), the General Assembly, in its resolution 64/201, invited parties to the Convention, observers, and other stakeholders to organize activities to observe the Decade with the aim of raising awareness about the causes of and solutions to ongoing land degradation and desertification under the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance implementation of the Convention (2008-2018), adopted at the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties. The Assembly further encouraged Member States and multilateral agencies in a position to do so to support the secretariat of the Convention financially and technically, with a view to supporting special initiatives in observance of the Decade as well as other observance events and activities worldwide. The Assembly further designated the secretariat of the Convention as the focal point of the Decade, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and other relevant bodies of the United Nations, including the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat. It also requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly, at its sixty-ninth session, on the status of the implementation of the resolution.

III. Actions undertaken by the secretariat of the Convention

4. The secretariat of the Convention plans and reviews its activities on a biennial basis, and applied the same approach to Decade activities. States parties and observers reported to the Conference of the Parties on their activities, including Decade activities, using the performance review and assessment of implementation system based on the results-based management approach.

5. Based on guidance from the General Assembly and the Conference of the Parties (see decisions 30/COP.9, 31/COP.10 and 7/COP.11), the secretariat of the Convention initiated a number of activities to implement the Decade. Parties and to

the Convention and observers were invited to submit their plans for observance of the Decade at the local and national levels and an inter-agency task force was set up to prepare, in a collaborative manner, activities envisaged under the Decade. Other initiatives have included: organizing and hosting global observances of the World Day to Combat Desertification; organizing side events on desertification, land degradation and drought on the margins of major conferences; promoting joint activities on desertification, land degradation and drought with other agencies and United Nations entities; and publishing outreach materials.

6. The secretariat of the Convention, in collaboration with other United Nations entities, chose an overarching theme for each year of the Decade, with a view to advancing the objectives of the Decade by leveraging interlinkages with major global events. The annual themes were: forests (2010); biodiversity and drylands (2011); the green economy (2012); drought and water scarcity (2013); and ecosystem-based adaptation (2014). The key target groups for the activities were policy and decision makers, advocates and activists, children and youth and non-governmental organizations. Special focus was also given to mainstream and social media, with a view to amplifying the messages.

A. Plans and activities undertaken by States parties and observers to the Convention to advance the Decade

7. The Conference of the Parties, by its decision 31/COP.10, adopted at its tenth session, invited States parties, observers and intergovernmental organizations to submit to the secretariat, by 31 December 2010, proposals and contributions in the form of actions, activities and events to mark the Decade. It also requested the secretariat of the Convention to compile those contributions, to develop a programme in support of the Decade and to extend its partnership network to include representatives from civil society and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. In addition, it requested the secretariat to report to the Conference of the Parties at its eleventh session on voluntary actions and activities carried out by stakeholders to mark the Decade.

8. A total of 12 parties submitted reports to the Convention on their planned activities for the Decade. Reports were also submitted by 10 other organizations, including United Nations agencies and two non-governmental organizations. Most parties proposed to integrate their plans for the Decade into their own national agendas concerning desertification, land degradation and drought and to fulfil the priorities of the 10-year strategic plan and framework as part of their Decade-related activities.

9. National plans to implement the Decade included the organization of workshops or seminars on desertification, land degradation and drought, with the objective of building capacity, as a way to ensure that countries are committed to their national action programmes, based on the provisions of the Convention, and to align them with the objectives of the 10-year strategy and framework. Several national plans also included the organization of workshops and seminars to encourage participatory development, training in sustainable land management and the sharing of related research results. As part of the Decade activities, many parties also reported on the integration of their national action programmes with their

national development planning and their efforts to develop investment frameworks at the regional and/or local levels.

10. Activities envisaged by parties to the Convention to implement the Decade also included activities to raise awareness using media, marketing campaigns, film and global forums, especially on issues related to the availability, management and quality of and access to water and sanitation, and cultural events, including national festivals to celebrate drylands; sporting events; museum exhibits; and events that include education programmes targeting children and youth.

11. Some parties envisaged activities involving publications and expositions, as well as the organization of exchanges between experts and visits to projects showcasing success in combating desertification, as part of the celebration of the Decade. These included plans for awards and recognition for best practices in sustainable land management, to be presented during major observances, such as the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought.

12. During the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties, 40 affected developing countries reported that they were implementing Decade activities. The countries were: Argentina, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, China, Cook Islands, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kuwait, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Mongolia, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Portugal, Russian Federation, Sao Tome and Principe, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam. Four developed countries, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy and Switzerland, also reported that they were implementing Decade activities.

B. Collaboration and partnership with United Nations entities to advance the Decade

13. With a view to advancing the objectives of the Decade in collaboration with other United Nations entities, and bearing in mind the guidance from resolution 64/201 and decision 30/COP.9, the Executive Secretary of the Convention initiated the establishment of an inter-agency task force and invited United Nations entities, including UNEP, UNDP, IFAD and the Department of Public Information to participate. Following the guidance received from decision 31/COP.10, the membership of the task force was expanded to include the following intergovernmental organizations: the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Global Environment Facility, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Forum on Forests, the World Agroforestry Organization and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

14. The mandate entrusted to the inter-agency task force was to plan and develop Decade events, bearing in mind the 10-year strategy and framework and Conference decisions. The task force was also mandated to support Decade events and to ensure that the momentum for action is maintained throughout the decade.

15. The inter-agency task force has developed a strategy and plan of action for the Decade, which was presented to the parties to the Convention at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which took note of it (see decision 31/COP.10). The strategy and plan of action takes into account the concern expressed by the Assembly about the increasing desertification in all regions, with its far-reaching implications for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those of eradicating poverty and ensuring environmental sustainability. It provides a focused framework for strategic action, but is considered a "living document" that can respond to global changes. In this regard, the thematic focus of each year is to be aligned with campaigns and activities in progress throughout the United Nations system.

16. By the end of the Decade, the goal is for the international community to be sensitized and committed to preserving and improving drylands and desert ecosystems and to addressing desertification and land degradation through sustainable land management for the eradication of poverty, improved local livelihoods and the attainment of environmental sustainability.

17. To achieve this, the strategy and plan of action specifies two objectives for the Decade: (a) to transmit a clear, concise and powerful message about the value of drylands and desert ecosystems and the effects of desertification, land degradation and drought; and (b) to create a global coalition of individuals, organizations and institutions at all levels to promote sustainable land management in drylands and desert ecosystems.

18. Starting in 2012, in the light of the submissions of parties following decision 31/COP.10 (discussed in the next subsection), the task force focused its activities on a few major initiatives, including supporting the observance of World Day to Combat Desertification); web-based outreach focused on youth; the organization of thematic side events; and the development of materials for advocacy on desertification, land degradation and drought.

19. The task force takes a pragmatic approach to its work, serving mostly as an advisory and coordination mechanism. Decisions on plans and activities are undertaken in consultation with all members, but the implementation of Decade activities may be undertaken among only a few partners. This collaboration has resulted in significant outreach to the general public, most notably through mainstream and social media, the use of which has improved data gathering on the impact of such outreach campaigns.

20. From time to time, the task force has also organized Decade activities, including the launch of the Decade in August 2010; the global observance of the World Decade for Cultural Development, in Ghent, Belgium, in 2013, and at the headquarters of the World Bank, in Washington, D.C., in 2014; an observance event for the Equator Initiative, a partnership for resilient communities led by UNDP, in Nairobi, at which the Equator Prize for Sustainable Land Management in Sub-Saharan Africa was awarded for the first time; and a kick-off campaign for the World Decade for Cultural Development, in March 2014, on the margins of Africa Environment Day/Wangari Maathai Day, held in Lesotho. The task force has also advanced the objectives of the Decade by supporting these and other Decade events through the development of written materials, such as a book entitled *Land for Life*, and outreach to the public and to mainstream and social media, including encouraging the heads of agencies to issue video messages.

C. Global and regional observances

21. The Decade was launched on 16 August 2010, in Fortaleza, Brazil, at the Second International Conference of Climate, Variability, Sustainability and Development. The global launch drew more than 2,500 participants from 100 countries, with high-ranking government officials, including ministers from Brazil, the Niger, Senegal and Switzerland, as well as governors and high-ranking officials from various institutions and heads of intergovernmental agencies participating in related activities. In anticipation of the International Year of Forests, scheduled for 2011, the theme for the launch was the value of dryland forests, with the rallying call, "forests keep the drylands working".

22. In his message noting the launch of the Decade, the Secretary-General stated that continued land degradation, whether from climate change, unsustainable agriculture or the poor management of water resources, was a threat to food security, would lead to starvation among the most acutely affected communities and would rob the world of productive land. The Secretary-General noted that desertification, land degradation and drought generated localized conflict as well as broader tensions, with migration posing risks of social breakdown and instability in increasingly crowded urban areas. Ministers from Algeria, Argentina, Bhutan and Germany, as well as the heads of the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, FAO, IFAD, UNDP, the Department of Public Information, UNEP, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and WMO, sent messages for the launch in support of the Decade. The event was covered by a wide range of media, including Agence France Presse and Inter Press Service, contributing to raising awareness of desertification, land degradation and drought.

23. Regional launches were also organized, including one for the African region, co-organized with UNEP and UNDP, which took place concurrently with the global launch, on 16 August 2010, at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi. Among the keynote speakers were the Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, the resident representative of UNDP, the Deputy Director General of the World Agroforestry Center, the Director General of the National Environment Management Authority of Kenya and a representative of indigenous communities living in drylands of Kenya.

24. The launch for the Asia-Pacific region took place on 12 October 2010, in Seoul, during an international symposium on the mitigation of desertification, land degradation and drought and the role of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. The event highlighted the threats of desertification, land degradation and drought in Asia, where they affect more people than in any other region of the world. Organized by the Korea Forest Service, the symposium drew more than 200 participants, including ministers, governors, scientists, policymakers and media organizations.

25. The North American launch was hosted by Colorado State University, in Fort Collins, Colorado, and the State Legislature, in Denver, United States of America, on 11 and 12 November 2010. The launch ceremony was followed by short seminars addressing land degradation issues in North America and the signing of a letter of intent between the Convention secretariat and the university to work closely on future research on desertification. With speakers from academia and the United Nations as well as government and civil society organizations, the presentations and discussion focused on the role of science in efforts to combat desertification. More

than 15 media outlets in the United States, including the *Denver Post* and the *San Francisco Examiner*, reported on the regional launch.

26. The European launch was held on 16 December 2010, in London, and focused on exploring the links between drylands and global human security, with a special focus on Europe, including the state of its soil degradation. It was jointly organized by the Convention, UNEP and the World Conservation Monitoring Center, with speakers drawn from the United Nations and academic and non-governmental organizations. The event was covered by major European and global media, including *The Guardian* and *Nature*.

27. On 15 and 16 December 2011, the Government of Algeria hosted a global observance event at the Timimoun Oasis and Tinerkouk Oasis and Castle (Adrar), in the Sahara, with the aim of demonstrating the economic value of desert ecosystems. The event included performances by the Fioretto Orchestra of Vienna and the celebrated South African gospel singer and Drylands Ambassador for the Convention, Deborah Fraser. A round table of policymakers and the media was held on the theme "Land-restoration initiatives leading to a land-degradation-neutral world", with a view to raising awareness about the related issues in preparation for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012.

28. A number of products, including brochures, fact sheets, success stories, posters, stickers, a website, a newsletter, lapel pins and press materials, were also developed to publicize the global and regional launches and observances. The materials and success stories were tailored to the needs of each regional launch. There was substantial media attention to the events globally, including interviews with the experts. The events that most successfully contributed to advancing the objectives of the Decade were those that were backed by local hosts with essential resources, including media contacts and contacts for civil society and private sector participants and policymakers.

D. Support to celebrations and observances for World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

29. The Convention secretariat, in collaboration with other stakeholders, including United Nations entities, has also sought to advance the objectives of the Decade through celebrations organized to commemorate World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought. World Day, which has been held every year on 17 June, starting in 1995, was proclaimed in 1994 by resolution 49/115. Its objective is to promote public awareness on international cooperation to combat desertification and the effects of drought and the implementation of the provisions of the Convention in affected countries. World Day events are organized at the national level, and since 2011, the secretariat of the Convention has been organizing a global observance event at a location outside its headquarters. Since the proclamation of the Decade, five global observances have been held. Since the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the parties and observers to the Convention and the task force have provided substantive inputs for World Day events.

30. The theme chosen for World Day to Combat Desertification in 2012 was "The management and use of land in a green economy", with a view to leveraging interest around the Conference on Sustainable Development in order to create awareness about desertification, land degradation and drought. The global observance of World

Day was held in June 2012, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, under the theme "Healthy soil sustains your life: let's go land degradation neutral". The theme sought to broaden public and policy engagement on the desertification and land degradation issues that were in negotiation at the same time at the Conference. The Secretary-General issued a message stressing that global efforts to halt and reverse land degradation were integral to creating "the future we want", and pointed out that sustainable land use was a prerequisite to lifting billions from poverty, enabling food and nutrition security and safeguarding water supplies, and, indeed, constituted a cornerstone of sustainable development. Emphasizing that the people living in the world's arid lands, which constitute more than 40 per cent of the planet's land mass, were among the poorest and most vulnerable to hunger, he said that the Millennium Development Goals could not be achieved by 2015 without preserving the soils on which the subsistence of these people depended. Without healthy soil, he pointed out, life on Earth would be unsustainable.

31. The global observance of World Day to Combat Desertification was held in Ghent, Belgium, on 17 June 2013, under the theme "Drought and water scarcity" and the slogan "Don't let our future dry up". The purpose was to create awareness of the risks of drought and water scarcity in the drylands and beyond; to draw attention to the importance of water cooperation in efforts to mitigate drought; and to call attention to the importance of sustaining healthy soils, as a follow-up to the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, as well as in the context of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda and the sustainable development goals. The event was co-hosted by UNESCO, the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health, the University of Ghent and the City of Ghent, Belgium, in the context of their international conference on the sustainable management of marginal drylands-reviewing 10 years of research on land conservation and sustainable development.

32. The Secretary-General also issued a message on the occasion of World Day to Combat Desertification in 2013, calling for a collective global response to drought and a shift from crisis management to drought preparedness and resilience. He indicated that the price for preparedness was minimal compared with the cost of disaster relief, and that droughts could be mitigated, and he called for the full implementation of the outcomes of the high-level meeting on national drought policy, held in Geneva, in March 2013. The Secretary-General also called for implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development related to avoiding and offsetting land degradation.

33. The commemorative event on the occasion of World Day to Combat Desertification in 2014 included a global observance at the headquarters of the World Bank, in Washington, D.C. The Prime Minister of the Niger and the Minister of Environment and Tourism of Namibia delivered keynote addresses on ecosystem-based adaptation. The theme for the Day, "Land belongs to the future, let's climate proof it", was chosen to raise awareness about the growing threats of climate change, which are linked to desertification and land degradation. The Prime Minister of the Niger cited growing risks, such as conflict, loss of life, falling agricultural production, food insecurity and disease in the Niger, linked to intensifying desertification and land degradation owing to climate change impacts, such as increased temperatures, shorter rainy seasons and the drying up of Lake Chad. He cited the African Great Green Wall as an important initiative to restore degraded areas and improve the conditions of the inhabitants of the drylands of

Africa. The Minister of Environment and Tourism of Namibia emphasized the importance of seizing the moment to promote a land-degradation-neutral world and stressed the importance of monitoring land-degradation neutrality, both under the Convention and the post-2015 development process. The Executive Secretary of the Convention, Monique Barbut, called for practical and empowering adaptation measures in all countries and highlighted simple and affordable sustainable land management practices. She suggested that food, water, income and security threats could be eased if common measures of success were established at the global level, sensible investments made in sustainable land use practices and safety nets created.

E. Decade observance on the margins of major conferences and events

34. With the aim of outreach to untapped constituencies and stakeholders, and advancing the objectives of the Decade, the secretariat of the Convention, in collaboration with other United Nations entities and relevant stakeholders, has also organized side events on the margins of major conferences and events. These events attracted attention to the interlinkages between desertification, land degradation and drought and themes such as climate change, biodiversity, the green economy and building resilience to natural disasters, such as drought.

35. An example of such a side event was the "Dialogue and planning session — observances of the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification", which was held at the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, in Changwon, Republic of Korea. Discussion focused on the outcomes envisioned by the end of the Decade, in 2020. The outputs included key messages for dissemination during the 2012 and 2013 observances of World Day to Combat Desertification. The Convention, WMO and UNDP were the lead organizers. Another significant example was the side event for civil society organizations entitled "Sustainable land management, can we make a difference? What is the cost?", which was held on 6 December 2011 at the Rio Conventions Pavilion, in Durban, South Africa, on the occasion of the seventeenth session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference. The event introduced the concept of "a land-degradation-neutral world", as well as cases and lessons learned about the costs of rehabilitating degraded rangelands and croplands. Discussion focused on successful examples of land restoration.

36. Another side event organized under the framework of the Decade took place in June 2012, at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, in Rio de Janeiro. Entitled "Re-greening for resilient landscapes: pastoralists and farmers stewarding ecosystems and economic returns in drylands", it was co-hosted by the Governments of Algeria and the Niger, and organized in partnership with World Vision International, International Partners for Sustainable Agriculture, the Citizens Network for Sustainable Development, the Savory Institute, the World Agroforestry Center and the Convention. The event showcased large-scale initiatives to restore and rehabilitate degraded agricultural and rangeland areas, with a view to demonstrating that the target of a land-degradation-neutral world is feasible. These methods include integrated farming practices, the use of livestock in holistic management, trees for evergreen agriculture and natural regeneration managed by

small-scale farmers. One major outcome was the announcement of the creation of a global network on evergreen agriculture.

37. In December 2012, at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Doha, a side event entitled "Grasslands climate change mitigation and adaptation potential" was held with a view to: (a) demonstrating the mitigation and adaptation potential associated with the rehabilitation of degraded grasslands and the role of livestock keepers in reversing degradation; and (b) presenting the use and measurement methods associated with national action plans (low emission development strategies, nationally appropriate mitigation actions) using projects in selected countries as examples. It was co-organized by the Government of Mongolia, the secretariat of the Convention and FAO, among others. The event highlighted that grasslands may experience small changes per hectare but that, owing to their vastness, they can store impressive stocks of carbon; that building carbon stocks in grasslands is compatible with livestock-based livelihoods; and that some grazing practices and integrated crop-livestock-tree systems can be scaled up.

38. In March 2013, a major side event was organized on the margins of the high-level meeting on national drought policy, in Geneva. Entitled "Practical steps to drought preparedness and risk management", it was designed to draw attention to the lack of drought preparedness and its implications in almost all countries of the world. It was pointed out that reactive and post-impact approaches and responses not only increase socioeconomic costs and vulnerability but also reduce the resilience of affected communities and ecosystems in the face of future droughts. The side event focused on: (a) innovative measures to monitor and manage drought, with examples drawn from the arid areas of Brazil; (b) measures to increase household resilience, with a focus on Kenya; (c) the role of wetlands and forest ecosystems in enhancing the provision of freshwater and strengthening livelihoods; and (d) concrete opportunities and practical steps for the general public to learn about and support forest and landscape restoration. The event also marked the start of the 2012 campaign for World Day to Combat Desertification, with the rallying call "Don't let our future dry up". It was co-hosted by the Convention on Biological Diversity, WMO and UNDP, and was held in partnership with the Ceará Foundation for Meteorology and Water Resources of Brazil.

39. In April 2013, a side event entitled "Dry forests: drought, water scarcity and the global development agenda" was held at the United Nations Forum on Forests, in Istanbul. The aim of the event, which was co-organized with the Department of Public Information and the United Nations Forum on Forests, was to share experiences and lessons learned in sustainably managing and restoring dry forests and to raise awareness of the links among deforestation, ecosystem degradation and drought. The event highlighted: (a) the benefits of dryland forest ecosystem restoration; (b) progress in dryland forestation and awareness raising in Turkey; and (c) proposals for global guidelines on restoring the resilience of forest landscapes. It included speakers from the African Forest Forum, the Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, for Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats, a non-governmental organization, and FAO. Discussion focused on the implications of improved dry forest management for drought risk reduction.

40. In September 2013, Gender Day was organized in Windhoek, under the theme "Drylands women's empowerment", on the margins of the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification. Participants

examined the status of gender policies in the drylands, in the light of present and anticipated challenges, and identified critical gaps and policy action needed to address the situation. The event had four objectives: (a) to review current and emerging gender policy issues in the drylands; (b) to strengthen the participation of Namibia in Decade activities; (c) to learn from the experience of Namibia in gender-related work in desertification, sustainable land management and drought mitigation; and (d) to learn from the experiences of other regions in gender-related work in desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management and drought mitigation.

41. Participants in the meeting included ministers, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Namibia, high-ranking officials of the United Nations, diplomats and representatives of civil society, academic and intergovernmental organizations. The Deputy Speaker of the National Council of the Republic of Namibia delivered the keynote address. The event examined the advances in women's empowerment over the past two decades, the emerging challenges and opportunities for women living in drylands, empowerment to improve livelihoods at household and community levels, the means to gender equality and equity and follow-up action. Organized in partnership with the University of Namibia, and with support from the Convention, the Government of Finland and UNDP, the event produced outputs that were included in the Namib Declaration on a stronger United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification for a land-degradation-neutral world.

F. Joint observances and other special initiatives to advance the objective of the Decade

42. A number of joint events and other special events at the national or local level have also been organized by the secretariat of the Convention in collaboration with parties to the Convention, United Nations entities and relevant stakeholders to advance the objectives of the Decade. Examples include four observances that were held in 2011 to jointly mark the Decade of Deserts and the Fight against Desertification and the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity.

43. The first joint observance of the two Decades was held on 4 July 2011, in Havana, during the launch of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity in the Caribbean countries, on the occasion of the Eighth International Convention on Environment and Development. Among the nearly 1,000 participants from 35 countries were the Vice-President of Cuba, ministers from Angola, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti and the Executive Secretaries of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification. The Executive Secretary of the Convention to Combat Desertification emphasized the importance of the fight against desertification and the loss of biodiversity, pointing out that scientific evidence showed strong links among water, soil and forests, and he said that the coincidence of the two Decades was a call to advance such understanding.

44. The second joint observance was held on 22 July 2011, in Addis Ababa, during the regional launch of the Decade on Biodiversity. The President of Ethiopia delivered a speech at the event. Other high-ranking officials also addressed the event, including the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, representatives of Japan and Argentina and a United Nations Goodwill Ambassador, Edward Norton.

45. On 18 October 2011, a ministerial event was hosted by the Government of the Republic of Korea for the joint observance of the Decade on Biological Diversity and the Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification. It took place on the occasion of the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification, and included a panel discussion whose theme was "A synergetic and coherent implementation of the United Nations Decades on Biodiversity and for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification". The event was attended by 35 ministers and high-ranking United Nations representatives from WMO, the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Convention on Biological Diversity, UNEP, UNDP and the United Nations Forum on Forests. The presentations highlighted the contributions of various stakeholders towards advancing the objectives of the two Decades. The Convention to Combat Desertification and UNDP also formally launched the full version of their joint assessment report entitled "The Forgotten Billion: Millennium Development Goals Achievement in the Drylands". The report details the plight of the 1 billion people living in poverty in the drylands and points out that addressing the plight of the "forgotten billion" is essential for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

46. On 23 October 2012, a local observance of the Decade, featuring an exhibition entitled "Expanding Deserts: A Global Concern", was held at the Bruce Museum, in Greenwich, Connecticut, United States; the exhibition ran from August 2012 to March 2013. Convention Drylands Ambassador Leila Lopes, Miss Universe 2011, delivered the keynote address. The event consisted of a three-part lecture series that delved into the issues and opportunities related to deserts.

47. On 11 November 2011, a joint observance was held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris at the launch of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity. The Director General of UNESCO presided over the ceremony, which was attended by more than 80 participants. The Director General highlighted the integrated, multidisciplinary approach of the organization's new biodiversity initiative aimed at the effective implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, while addressing desertification, land degradation and drought. The outcomes of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on addressing desertification, land degradation and drought in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, held on 20 September 2011, were also presented at the event.

48. On 14 December 2012, a special event was organized during the Bonn International Model United Nations, with a view to creating awareness among youth about the objectives of the Decade. An online campaign targeting children and youth, entitled "Going land degradation neutral" was launched. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness about the outcomes of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development on desertification, land degradation and drought. The publicity materials, including the design of a website geared to young people, video stories, articles and quizzes, were developed and produced by young people.

G. Awareness raising advocacy

49. Raising awareness about desertification, land degradation and drought is a crucial component of the Decade. In addition to the organization of events and joint

observances, specific products have been developed to enhance targeted outreach to a wide range of stakeholders, to heighten the visibility of the activities and to ensure that United Nations norms are reflected in the campaigns. These products include resources for branding, such as logos and brochures, as well as films and books and the organization of film festivals.

50. Examples of such advocacy products include the website for the launch of the Decade, which was developed in 2010, and provided background information, key reports, photo galleries, databases and toolkits for various actors. Success stories of land restoration around the world and fact sheets have been posted on the website. In 2013, the report "Land for life: managing land sustainably for better livelihoods" was published and launched on the margins of the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. The publication showcases 40 innovative approaches and solutions to combating desertification and land degradation that are effectively tackling the challenges of poverty, deforestation, climate change, loss of biodiversity, water scarcity or food security, or are effective in raising awareness. Written in accessible language, the report provides a short introduction about the intersection between land degradation and each of these challenges, followed by cases that demonstrate different ways in which individuals, organizations or governments are addressing them. The report highlights activities in 34 countries: Argentina, Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, China, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Ghana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Namibia, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Philippines, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan and Zimbabwe.

51. Two films have been produced to advance the objectives of the Decade. United Nations Television and Video supported the production of a short documentary about land degradation and water scarcity in Latin America entitled *Brazil: Desertification*. Filmed in the dryland areas of north-eastern Brazil, in 2010, the film shows the links among land management, land degradation, water scarcity and migration. The film also showcases successful initiatives to restore the land and improve water access, even in times of drought. The second film, entitled *Regreening Ethiopia's Highlands*, produced in 2014 with the support of the World Bank and TerrAfrica, demonstrates the benefits of large-scale restoration in degraded areas through the story of the remarkable transformation taking place in Ethiopia through sustainable land management interventions.

52. During the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, a film festival on desertification, land degradation and drought was organized as one of the Decade events. Among the films screened were *A Thirsty World*, *The Man Who Stopped the Desert*, *Colours of the Deserts* and *Dirt! The Movie*.

53. *A Thirsty World* (*La soif du monde*) (2012), by Yann Arthus-Bertrand, highlights the situation of fresh water in 20 countries of Europe, Africa, Asia and America. *Dirt! The Movie* (2010), by Bill Benenson and Gene Rosow, is about soil, the Earth's most valuable and underappreciated source of land fertility. *The Man Who Stopped the Desert*, by Mark Dodd, is about a remarkable peasant farmer in Burkina Faso whose ingenious farming methods have provided the key to achieving what has eluded many experts in the Sahel: arresting desertification. The last three films are from the series *Colours of the Deserts* (2011), by the German public-service broadcaster Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen, and demonstrate the value of

desert ecosystems. *The Red Colorado Plateau* explains how the plateau was formed, the role the desert plays in conserving the Colorado River and the land's cultural value for various communities. *The White Uyuni* explores the Salar de Uyuni desert, the world's largest salt flat, located at the crest of the Andes, in Bolivia. The film presents its uniqueness and economic value, and the ways in which it has shaped the music, religious rituals and gender roles among the local people. *The Yellow Sahara* focuses on the North African part of the desert. Over the course of a 10-day journey, the narrator presents its beauty and the various cultures of its inhabitants. Each film was preceded by a brief introduction and followed by a half-hour discussion between the public and experts on each subject, drawn from among Conference participants.

54. Other materials developed for awareness raising on desertification, land degradation and drought include a customized web portal designed for children and youth.

IV. Lessons learned

55. The United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification, established by the General Assembly, has served to enhance awareness about desertification, land degradation and drought and the need to strengthen implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification. This has been reflected in the outcomes of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, where world leaders recognized that desertification and land degradation were global phenomena affecting all regions, particularly developing countries, and committed to strive towards a land-degradation-neutral world. The secretariat of the Convention has also built partnerships and drawn on the United Nations system to enhance public outreach and advocacy to a range of stakeholders on the issues of desertification and land degradation, in order to advance the objectives of the Convention. Such a collaborative approach has enabled the secretariat to leverage human and financial resources for collective action through the joint organization of events. However, as envisioned in resolution 64/201, additional resources are still needed to make the Decade an effective mechanism for reaching new constituencies in all regions, including nurturing a new generation of young people informed about the global impacts of desertification and land degradation.

56. Planning ahead for the remaining years of the Decade, and bearing in mind projections from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which reveal a deteriorating water situation globally, with the poorest people hardest hit by the impacts of droughts and floods, it is clear that the observances, events and activities for the Decade will be crucial to highlighting options that strengthen the adaptation and resilience of poor populations, especially those living in degrading ecosystems. To do so, the secretariat envisages a number of activities to advance the objectives of the Decade. These include efforts to build on the success of the *Land for Life* publication, by envisaging more publications on the benefits of combating land degradation, in terms of wealth creation, adaptation to climate change, food and water security and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

57. There is also still untapped potential for outreach and advocacy through social media and other web-based platforms.

V. Recommendations

58. **The General Assembly may wish to take note of the activities and initiatives undertaken to advance the objectives of the Decade so far and to renew the call to Member States, regional commissions and multilateral agencies to consider supporting the secretariat of the Convention in organizing special initiatives in observance of the Decade as well as other observance events and activities worldwide. The Assembly may also wish to encourage foundations and private sector and civil society organizations to support and contribute to activities that advance the objectives of the Decade.**

59. **Recognizing the opportunity that the Decade presents to educate young people about good land stewardship, the Assembly may wish to emphasize the need for strengthening outreach activities among children and youth, with a view to raising generations with an appreciation of the future impacts of climate change on the land.**

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Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 68/210, provides an update on the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the preparations for the intergovernmental negotiations for the post-2015 development agenda, and the implementation of the resolution. The report highlights the role of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in reviewing the overall follow-up to the Conference in the context of the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. It also examines how coherence and synergies across the different functions of the forum can be achieved in order to best support the post-2015 development agenda. In particular, the report looks at the following functions: agenda-setting; follow-up and review of progress in the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits; national voluntary reviews; increasing transparency and strengthening civil society participation; strengthening the science-policy interface; promoting the coordination of sustainable development policies; and improving cooperation and coordination within the United Nations system on sustainable development programmes and policies.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report provides information on progress made in implementing General Assembly resolution 68/210 on the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. As preparations for the post-2015 development agenda proceed, it takes an integrated look at the status of the various processes set up for the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, with due consideration of the Assembly's call for coherence, synergy and mutual support among follow-up processes.

2. In this regard, the present report focuses on the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals; the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing; the General Assembly process to identify options for a facilitation mechanism that promotes the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies; and the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States. Some of the processes have not yet concluded their work; the report provides an update of the various processes as at the beginning of August 2014.

3. The report also examines how the various functions of the high-level political forum on sustainable development can contribute to supporting the post-2015 development agenda.

4. The present report should be read in conjunction with other reports on sustainable development submitted to the General Assembly.

II. Follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

5. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want" (resolution 66/288, annex), launched several intergovernmental processes. Several of those are to be concluded by September 2014 and will inform the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda that will start at the beginning of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

A. High-level political forum on sustainable development

6. A critical outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development was the establishment of a universal intergovernmental high-level political forum to follow up on the implementation of sustainable development.

7. In July 2013, the General Assembly, in its resolution 67/290, decided on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum.

8. The high-level political forum is a hybrid platform: it will meet every four years for two days under the auspices of the General Assembly at the level of Heads of State and Government and every year under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council for eight days, including a three-day ministerial segment within the

high-level segment of the Council. It will replace the annual ministerial review of the Council in 2016.

9. The first and inaugural meeting of the high-level political forum under the auspices of the General Assembly was held at the level of Heads of State and Government on 24 September 2013, while the second meeting of the forum (and the first under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council) was held from 30 June to 9 July 2014.

10. The meeting under the auspices of the General Assembly resulted in a summary by the President of the General Assembly (A/68/588), on an exceptional basis, as it was an inaugural meeting. The overall theme of the meeting was "Building the future we want: from Rio+20 to the post-2015 development agenda". The statements delivered during the meeting highlighted that it was within the present generation's reach to help the poor to break out of poverty, achieve universal human development and entrust a healthy planet to future generations.

11. The theme of the second meeting of the forum, and the first under the auspices of the Economic Council, was "Achieving the Millennium Development Goals and charting the way for an ambitious post-2015 development agenda, including the sustainable development goals".

12. In late 2013 and the first quarter of 2014, the regional commissions and their partners held a series of broad and inclusive consultations at the regional and subregional levels that fed into the forum. Those included regional meetings on sustainable development, explicitly designed as a preparatory process for the forum.[1]

13. The programme of the forum was organized around four tracks: (a) From the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to post-2015; (b) regional dimension and countries in special situations; (c) shaping the forum beyond 2015; and (d) science-policy interface. The meeting was also held in two parts: four days at the level of senior officials and a three-day ministerial segment as part of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council.

14. In the ministerial declaration adopted at the end of the three-day ministerial segment (E/HLS/2014/1), the ministers reiterated their commitment to establishing a strong, ambitious, inclusive and people-centred post-2015 development agenda. The declaration was also adopted by the Economic and Social Council. At the closing of the forum, the theme for the forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council in 2015 was adopted as follows: "Strengthening integration, implementation and review: the high-level political forum after 2015".

15. The high-level political forum featured rich discussions that showed the great potential for integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and engaged Member States, the United Nations system, major groups and other stakeholders.

16. The main messages from the forum can be summarized as follows:

- There is a unique opportunity to craft a development agenda that can bring the world to a more sustainable and prosperous future. The high-level political forum for 2014 is being convened at a pivotal point when many different work

[1] See http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=1439&menu=35.

streams are being brought together to form this agenda, which should stand on the solid base set at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

- The new integrated development agenda needs to finish the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals and address new challenges simultaneously. It should build on the foundations laid and experiences gained in the work towards achieving the Goals. It must focus on all three dimensions of sustainable development, address the underlying causes of poverty and address environmental degradation and unsustainable consumption and production patterns.

- Inclusiveness needs to be a defining characteristic of the new agenda, ensuring that no one is left behind either in developed or in developing countries. The sustainable development goals need to address inequalities, both within and between countries, beyond the traditional north-south divisions.

- In order to succeed, the new development agenda needs to be universal, that is, it must speak to all countries and citizens around the world and involve all the relevant actors in its implementation. A new global social contract, political will and mutual trust will be needed if the shared vision of a sustainable future is to be achieved.

- The high-level political forum will need to oversee the new development agenda and play an integral role in reviewing the implementation of the sustainable development goals. In this endeavour, the forum needs to integrate the international, regional and national levels and bring together all relevant actors and stakeholders. The forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council will conduct regular reviews, starting in 2016, on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives, including those related to the means of implementation, within the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

- A transformative agenda also requires the transformation of international cooperation for implementation. For the sustainable development goals to be achieved, the international community as a whole will have to carry the responsibility of striving towards them. At the same time, each country has to have the freedom to determine the size of its national contribution to the results.

- In addition to shared responsibility, fair burden sharing will be needed, and the question of provision of means of implementation will be crucial for the implementation of the sustainable development goals. In this regard, the international community will need to look at financing to unlock all possible sources in support of sustainable development and to revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development for the benefit of all countries.

B. Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals

17. In paragraph 248 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Heads of State and Government called for the establishment of an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on sustainable development goals and, in this regard, mandated the constitution of an

open working group. The Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals was tasked with submitting a report to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session containing a proposal for sustainable development goals for consideration and appropriate action.

18. The Open Working Group held a total of 13 sessions.[2] At its first session, on 14 and 15 March 2013, the Open Working Group elected its Co-Chairs, adopted its methods of work and conducted a general discussion and an interactive discussion on the sustainable development goals. At its second to eighth sessions, it considered a range of subjects relevant to the formulation of sustainable development goals. It did so through keynote addresses, introductions of issues briefs by the technical support team, panel discussions and interactive exchanges of views, and national statements. At its ninth to thirteenth sessions, it held discussions on a proposal for sustainable development goals. At its thirteenth session, the Open Working Group agreed by acclamation to submit the proposal for sustainable development goals to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session for consideration and appropriate action.

19. The principles of sustainable development are reflected in the set of 17 universal sustainable development goals and 169 targets proposed by the Open Working Group. Taken in their totality, the goals and targets encapsulate a transformative agenda, building on the Millennium Development Goals and incorporating elements relating to the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. In their statements at the concluding session of the Open Working Group, many Member States said that, while the document was not perfect, it constituted an excellent base for further consideration under the post-2015 development agenda. The prominent role and the valuable contribution of civil society, as well as of the inter-agency technical support team, were also recognized.

20. The General Assembly will give further guidance on the road map for elaborating the agenda.

C. Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing

21. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Heads of State and Government decided to establish an intergovernmental process under the auspices of the General Assembly to assess financing needs, consider the effectiveness, consistency and synergies of existing instruments and frameworks and evaluate additional initiatives, with a view to preparing a report proposing options on an effective sustainable development financing strategy to facilitate the mobilization of resources and their effective use in achieving sustainable development objectives (resolution 66/288, annex, paras. 255-256).

22. The Committee was established by the General Assembly in its decision 67/559 of 21 June 2013. The five sessions of the Committee were held between August 2013 and August 2014 in New York.

[2] For more information, see http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/owg.html.

23. The Committee, co-chaired by Pertti Majanen (Finland) and Mansur Muhtar (Nigeria), organized its work in three clusters: (a) assessment of financing needs, mapping of current flows and emerging trends, and the impact of domestic and international environments; (b) mobilization of resources and their effective use; and (c) institutional arrangements, policy coherence, synergies and governance issues. It drew technical support from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the United Nations system. Although the sessions of the Committee were restricted to 30 experts, the Committee held broad open consultations with international and regional financial institutions and other stakeholders, including through many outreach meetings in all regions.

24. At its fifth session, on 8 August 2014, the Committee adopted its draft report[3] and entrusted the Co-Chairs, in collaboration with the Secretariat, with forwarding the report to the General Assembly for its consideration.

25. The Committee's report adopts the conceptual framework of the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development and provides an overview of options for the mobilization of resources from different sources and their effective use in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

D. Options for facilitating the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies

26. With respect to the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the General Assembly on technology facilitation, four workshops were convened by the President of the General Assembly at the sixty-seventh session of the Assembly. Four structured dialogues were held at the sixty-eighth session, guided by the two co-moderators appointed by the President of the General Assembly (Paul Seger (Switzerland) and Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota (Brazil)). The dialogues drew from the knowledge and perspectives of thinkers and practitioners from academia, research institutions and non-governmental organizations, as well as the United Nations system and other international organizations.

27. The structured dialogues allowed participants to better appreciate the range of opinions on the subject and the complexity of issues and to deepen discussions. Convergence was expressed by participants regarding the following actions that could be taken immediately:

- Mapping of technology facilitation initiatives and networks and creation of an information and knowledge-sharing platform thereon.
- Strengthening of synergies and coordination among United Nations entities engaged in technology facilitation (e.g. through a United Nations technology coordination mechanism).
- Possibly, targeted assessments of technology needs of developing countries, with a focus on clean and environmentally sound technologies and taking into account existing assessments.

[3] Available from http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1558.

28. In its resolution 68/210, the General Assembly requested the President of the General Assembly to submit to it at its sixty-eighth session a summary of the discussions and recommendations emerging from the structured dialogues, including on the possible modalities and organization of a technology facilitation mechanism. The present section should thus be read in conjunction with that summary.

29. The fourth dialogue also confirmed a broadly shared resolve that intergovernmental dialogue on options for a technology facilitation mechanism should be continued and deepened at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, during which elements of a mechanism could be proposed.

E. Strengthening the science-policy interface

30. An effective conversation between scientific communities and decision-makers around the world is essential for evidence-based policymaking.

31. One of the functions of the high-level political forum, recognized at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, is to strengthen the science-policy interface and enhance evidence-based decision-making at all levels, including through a global sustainable development report that builds on existing assessments. The global sustainable development report and other documentation prepared for the forum should enable it to fulfil this role.

32. At the 2014 session of the high-level political forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, participants considered the scope and methodology of a global sustainable development report on the basis of a proposal of the Secretary-General reflecting the views of Member States and relevant United Nations entities, including the Committee for Development Policy (E/2014/87).

33. In preparation for the forum, the Secretariat produced a prototype global sustainable development report[4] in order to facilitate the discussion. The report maps existing sustainable development assessments and related processes and highlights the emerging issues identified by scientists. It assesses progress made towards sustainable development; illustrates a range of future pathways towards sustainable development based on the scenario literature; and presents various approaches to measuring progress towards sustainable development. It identifies lessons learned from national, regional and global case studies of the climate-land-energy-water-development nexus regarding the benefits of an integrated approach to policymaking. It also presents illustrative science digests for decision makers.

34. The discussion at the high-level political forum showed broad agreement that the global sustainable development report offered an opportunity to bring together scientific communities, analytical teams of the United Nations system, decision makers and civil society to provide a solid platform between science and policy that supports transformative change at both the global and local levels.

35. The prototype report was well received, and the underlying message sent by many speakers was that the best value that the global sustainable development report could bring was "connecting the dots" across sector assessments. Most speakers pointed to a multi-stakeholder, multi-scale and multi-level approach with links to national processes as an attractive option for future editions of the report.

[4] Available from http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1621.

36. Speakers also pointed out the importance of building knowledge-based societies, expanding human knowledge, improving technologies and making relevant data and dispersed information available in all countries. Therefore, all Member States may want to consider their own national sustainable development reports as part of a global conversation. Capacity-building support will be needed, especially in developing countries, in particular the least developed countries.

37. A number of concrete suggestions were made on the way forward, including the creation of an advisory group on the global sustainable development report, a network of national focal points, and input from the Scientific Advisory Board of the Secretary-General, the Future Earth initiative, the academies of sciences, United Nations entities and regional commissions and regional and national research initiatives.

38. In the ministerial declaration adopted at the high-level political forum for 2014, ministers resolved to strengthen the science-policy interface, including through a global sustainable development report building on existing assessments which could provide a strong evidence-based instrument to support policymakers in promoting poverty eradication and sustainable development, thus contributing to the strengthening of ongoing capacity-building for data collection and analysis in developing countries.

F. Sustainable consumption and production

39. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Governments strengthened their commitment to accelerating the shift towards sustainable consumption and production by adopting the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns. That decision[5] also defined the mandate for the framework and its vision and functions, as well as an initial, non-exhaustive list of five programmes areas.[6] The United Nations Environment Programme, within its current mandate, was requested to serve as secretariat of the framework and was asked to establish a voluntary trust fund to support the implementation thereof.

40. The General Assembly, in its elaboration of the formal and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, decided that the forum could provide recommendations to the board of the framework, as well as to the United Nations Environment Programme, as secretariat, taking into account their reports (resolutions 67/290 and 68/210). In this vein, the high-level political forum for 2014, held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, convened two interactive dialogues on sustainable consumption patterns, focusing on the contribution of sustainable consumption patterns to the sustainable development goals and on interaction with the framework's board and secretariat. An interim progress report provided by the board outlined progress made in the implementation of the mandate, including the operationalization of the board, the

[5] The General Assembly, in its resolution 66/288, endorsed the outcome document of the Conference, entitled "The future we want", paragraph 226 of which concerns the framework as elaborated in the annex to the letter dated 18 June 2012 from the representative of Brazil to the Secretary-General of the Conference (A/CONF.216/5).

[6] Consumer information, sustainable lifestyles and education, sustainable public procurement, sustainable buildings and construction, and sustainable tourism, including ecotourism.

secretariat and the trust fund, the nomination of 110 national focal points, the convening of regional meetings and the initiation of several of the initially envisioned programmes. An inter-agency coordination group was established, with the participation of 19 United Nations entities to date.

41. Member States stressed the universality of sustainable consumption patterns, with developed countries taking the lead in the transition to such patterns and developing countries being offered opportunities to "leapfrog". Such a shift, however, continues to require support for technology diffusion, financing and capacity-building.

G. Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States[7]

42. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Member States reaffirmed that small island developing States were a special case for sustainable development and called for the convening of the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in 2014. Samoa made a gracious offer to host the Conference, and the General Assembly decided, in its resolutions 67/207 and 68/238, to hold the Conference from 1 to 4 September 2014, to be preceded by activities relating to the Conference.

43. In the above-mentioned resolutions, the General Assembly defined the basic objectives of the Conference as follows: (a) to assess the progress and gaps in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action; (b) to seek renewed political commitment to address the special needs and vulnerabilities of small island developing States; (c) to identify new and emerging challenges and opportunities and ways to address them, including through collaborative partnership; and (d) to identify priorities for the sustainable development of small island developing States in the context of the post-2015 development agenda, as well as the theme of the Conference, "The sustainable development of small island developing States through genuine and durable partnerships". It was also decided that the Conference would serve as a forum to build on existing successful partnerships, as well as to launch innovative and concrete new ones, to advance the sustainable development of small island developing States. In this regard, multi-stakeholder partnership dialogues are an official part of the Conference and will have the following themes: sustainable economic development; climate change and disaster risk management; social development in small island developing States, health and non-communicable diseases, and youth and women; sustainable energy; oceans, seas and biodiversity; and water and sanitation, food security and waste management.

44. The preparations are led by the international community, in particular the small island developing States. The secretariat, located in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, is led by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs as Secretary-General of the Conference, with the involvement of all the relevant parts of the United Nations system.

[7] See also the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/69/319).

45. In order to conduct the preparatory process, the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference was elected, including the two Co-Chairs, Karen Tan (Singapore) and Phillip Taula (New Zealand).[8] Two Preparatory Committee meetings were held,[9] as was an intersessional meeting,[10] in order to define the outcome of the Conference.

46. The outcome document of the Conference, entitled "Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (Samoa Pathway)" (A/CONF.223/3) and approved by the Preparatory Committee, consists of a series of actionable points to help small island developing States to achieve sustainable development and address their specific challenges. It addresses the issues of partnerships, financing, trade, capacity-building, technology, data and statistics, and monitoring and accountability, as well as institutional support to small island developing States and their priorities for the post-2015 development agenda.

H. Partnerships and voluntary commitments

47. Partnerships and voluntary commitments for sustainable development are multi-stakeholder initiatives voluntarily undertaken by Governments, intergovernmental organizations, major groups and others stakeholders to contribute to the implementation of intergovernmentally agreed development goals and commitments, as included in Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Millennium Declaration, the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the upcoming post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

48. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, it was duly acknowledged that such voluntary initiatives were complementary to the political outcome. The Secretary-General was invited, in paragraph 283 of the outcome document of the Conference, to establish and maintain a comprehensive registry of voluntary initiatives, which was to be periodically updated, fully transparent and accessible to the public.

49. Pursuant to that request, the United Nations Secretariat launched the Sustainable Development in Action Registry shortly after the Conference. The Registry, which contains detailed descriptions of all registered voluntary initiatives, also facilitates access to other registries and initiatives or "action networks" that promote sustainable development and that have catalysed voluntary commitments around specific themes. These include the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, the United Nations Global Compact, the "Every woman, every child" initiative, the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative, the Action Network on Sustainable Transport, and the Action Network on Partnerships for Small Island Developing States, which has emerged in the lead-up to the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States.

[8] The other members of the Bureau are: Barbados, Japan, Mauritius, Mexico, Romania, Seychelles, Spain, Ukraine and Samoa as ex officio member.

[9] The first Preparatory Committee meeting was held from 24 to 26 February 2014 and the final meeting from 23 to 27 June and on 11 July 2014.

[10] The intersessional meeting was held from 21 to 25 April 2014.

50. An enhanced accountability framework for voluntary commitments and partnerships for sustainable development that allows increased transparency and accountability will be an important component of the post-2015 development agenda.

I. Other actions taken by the United Nations system in follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

51. The participants at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development called for the further mainstreaming of the three dimensions of sustainable development throughout the United Nations system and requested the Secretary-General to report, through the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly on progress made in that regard.

52. The Secretary-General submitted two reports (A/68/79-E/2013/69 and A/69/79-E/2014/66) to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Both the reports and the discussions thereon have shown the accumulated experience of the United Nations system in supporting integrated approaches to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. At the same time, it is recognized that mainstreaming sustainable development remains a complex endeavour that implies rethinking the way that the United Nations conceives its analytical and operational work and its support to intergovernmental processes. Mainstreaming sustainable development in the United Nations system is closely related to equipping the United Nations system to support the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. Continued efforts and reporting to Member States will thus be essential.

53. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the United Nations system was also tasked with taking an active role in implementing and supporting sustainable development at all levels.

54. In this regard, in August 2012 the Secretary-General wrote to all the United Nations system principals, inviting them to work together to implement the Conference decisions. A matrix[11] showing the allocation of responsibilities for following up on the mandates laid out at the Conference has served to organize United Nations system follow-up. It is also an accountability framework in the system and a working tool to monitor progress. The matrix is being updated regularly to reflect progress and new initiatives.

55. The United Nations system remains engaged in these follow-up processes through the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its subsidiary bodies, as well as the expanded Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs. Ad hoc inter-agency mechanisms were set up to support the work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals,[12] as well as the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing,[13] until the conclusion of their work in July and August 2014, respectively. The technical support team which assisted the Open Working Group piloted new ways of

[11] Available from http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/unsystem.html.

[12] See http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1549.

[13] See http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1558.

working together for the United Nations system. Its experience will be built upon as the United Nations system gears up to support the high-level political forum.

III. Coherence and coordination of the follow-up processes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in the context of the post-2015 development agenda and the role of the high-level political forum on sustainable development

56. The present section reviews how the different tracks of the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development come together in the context of the post-2015 development agenda and explores how the high-level political forum on sustainable development can fully support this agenda.

57. The contours of the post-2015 development agenda are emerging: sustainable development and poverty eradication are now firmly recognized as its overarching objectives.[14] The forthcoming synthesis report of the Secretary-General will provide a base for the intergovernmental negotiations which will be starting at the beginning of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. The report will provide a consolidated analysis of the inputs of the many processes that are contributing to the post-2015 development agenda, including those related to the sustainable development goals, the financing strategy for sustainable development and options for a technology facilitation mechanism.

58. The agenda is expected to be adopted at a summit to be held in September 2015, the precise modalities of which are being determined by the General Assembly.

59. The period until the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda in September 2015 is a transition period. It should be used by Member States to fine-tune the design of the various roles and functions of the high-level political forum which will have a critical role in promoting and reviewing the implementation of the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda, in the context of the United Nations institutional framework for sustainable development. By 2016, all of the functions of the forum should be exercised to their full extent.

60. In so doing, it is important to consider possible synergies among the various functions that Member States defined for the forum as the high-level United Nations platform dedicated to sustainable development. As outlined in paragraph 85 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and in General Assembly resolution 67/290, the forum was tasked with numerous roles, which should be considered in conjunction with one another in order to optimize the forum's role to serve the post-2015 development agenda.

61. Section II of the present report attests that the high-level political forum for 2014, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, was

[14] See, for example, the outcome document of the special event to follow up efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (General Assembly resolution 68/6) and the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2014 session of the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Council (E/HLS/2014/1).

successful and useful to Member States. Future sessions of the forum could benefit from a sharp focus on its mandated functions. Those include giving guidance and recommendations for sustainable development and considering new and emerging sustainable development challenges; following up and reviewing progress in the implementation of all the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields, as well as their respective means of implementation; promoting the sharing of best practices and experiences relating to the implementation of sustainable development; increasing transparency and strengthening participation; strengthening the science-policy interface; and promoting United Nations system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies.

Agenda-setting and guidance

62. The high-level political forum, together with a revitalized General Assembly and a strengthened Economic and Social Council, has shown its potential to support strengthened governance for sustainable development at the international level.

63. The 2014 meeting showed how the forum can fulfil its agenda-setting functions set out at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. This was done through its discussions on future pathways, international cooperation, integrated decision-making, means of implementation, national and regional perspectives, strengthening the science-policy interface, and sustainable consumption and production. The global sustainable development report appeared to be a key instrument to help the forum to draw international attention to trends, issues and policy approaches, as well as to the long-term implications of today's actions. The programme of the high-level political forum should give adequate space for discussing such new issues and perspectives and for looking at the long-term future.

64. The forum, by addressing various issues and providing a dedicated space to reflect on regional perspectives and countries in special situations, has been shown to be an integrative platform well suited to tracking the post-2015 development agenda. It has shown that it can establish a linkage between the national, regional and international levels in order to address common challenges in a synergistic and coherent manner.

Enhancing the integration of the three dimensions

65. The forum has demonstrated how the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development can be translated in practice in a manner relevant for policymaking. This integrative approach will be instrumental for the future review and monitoring of sustainable development goals within the framework of the post-2015 development agenda.

66. Integration will also need to be replicated at the national and regional levels by mainstreaming sustainable development in national and regional development policies in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

67. Balanced participation reflecting expertise from economic, social and environmental backgrounds was a key factor in the success of the forum for 2014. Since integration is possibly the most elusive goal of all owing to the many institutional obstacles that it faces at all levels, the challenge going forward will be

to maintain and deepen the cross-fertilization that balanced participation enables. This confirms a similar conclusion from the examination of the functioning of the Commission on Sustainable Development (see A/67/757).

Follow-up and review of progress in implementation

68. One of the pivotal functions of the high-level political forum in the context of the post-2015 development agenda will be monitoring and reviewing progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives. This encompasses both the sustainable development goals and the outcomes of relevant United Nations summits and conferences in the economic, social and environmental areas.

69. The prototype global sustainable development report has shown how various approaches can be combined in order to gain broader, long-term perspectives of progress towards sustainable development goals. Such approaches complement shorter-term monitoring approaches that have been used to review progress on the Millennium Development Goals, for example in annual reports.

70. There is still an important gap in capacity in developing countries with respect to developing and implementing systems of sustainable development indicators. This translates into a lack of systematic monitoring and a disconnect between national realities and international work. The forum will have a strong role to play in helping developing countries in this regard, which is also part of its mandate.

71. The forum also has a mandate to review means of implementation relating to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. This is likely to remain a challenging task, as the needs, requirements and commitments identified in Agenda 21 have remained a contentious issue during the 22 years since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

72. It will be critical to clarify issues concerning the means of implementation of the sustainable development goals. Proposed goal 17 in the report of the Open Working Group, strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development, underlines a range of means of implementation that could support the other goals in a cross-cutting way. More targeted means of implementation are also included in other proposed goals. In the context of Open Working Group discussions, there was an understanding that follow-up and monitoring arrangements for the means of implementation would be considered in the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda.

73. Given the importance of financing issues in the overall discussions on sustainable development, it will be critical for the forum to find a way to enable meaningful discussions and progress in this area. A unified framework for development beyond 2015 would require bringing together the thus far disjointed discussions on, among other things, traditional development financing, climate finance and biodiversity finance. Guiding such discussions would fit the agenda-setting function of the high-level political forum. Thus, the objective would be to provide consistency and coherence to discussions taking place in various thematic forums while respecting their respective mandates.

74. The report of the Intergovernmental Committee on Sustainable Development Financing provides a timely opportunity to re-examine the role of financing for sustainable development in a post-2015 context and to link the financing discussions

for the post-2015 development agenda to the discussions in the context of preparations for the third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa in July 2015.

75. The forum can also prove an additional platform in which possible options for a technology facilitation mechanism can be further discussed, with a view to arriving at pragmatic and useful solutions that will benefit all countries, especially developing countries, and can provide recommendations to advance this process.

76. Sustainable development goals are expected to provide the overarching goals and targets for international development cooperation. The forum can also provide a valuable platform in which to advance discussions on the global partnership for development, as well as on monitoring and accountability. With proposed sustainable development goals that are universal and cover a very broad agenda, the requirements in terms of accountability are poised to change significantly for developed and developing countries, the United Nations system and a variety of stakeholders.

77. The architecture for accountability will have to be built from the grass-roots level, where most of the impacts of development will be felt. Strong links should be enabled through the regions to the global level, where specific commitments are made and overseen. Mechanisms for feedback in both directions will be needed, and the regional commissions and their coordinating mechanisms will have an important role to play.

Promoting system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies

78. Another important dimension of the forum is a regional one, which is anchored in strong General Assembly mandates.[15] The regional dimension was very much present in the discussions of the forum in 2014 and needs to be explored further. In particular, this requires strengthening regional preparatory meetings for the forum as part of an overall robust preparatory process.

79. The regional preparatory sessions for the forum will have to build on the experience gained and gaps identified during the preparation for the 2014 meeting. In particular, the organizational agreements reached by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Economic Commission for Africa for the holding of regional preparatory sessions, building on existing forums/meetings and avoiding duplication, were valuable steps to integrate the regional commissions into the global preparations for the high-level political forum. On the other hand, regional meetings were held late owing to the late decision on the theme of the forum and did not influence the global discussions as much as intended.

[15] In its resolution 67/290, the General Assembly acknowledged the importance of the regional dimension of sustainable development and invited the regional commissions to contribute to the work of the forum, including through annual regional meetings, with the involvement of other relevant regional entities, major groups and other relevant stakeholders.

Promoting the sharing of best practices and experiences relating to the implementation of sustainable development

80. During the transition period, there needs to be a discussion on how best to prepare the forum for conducting reviews that will replace the national voluntary presentations held in the context of the Council starting in 2016. While paragraph 8 of resolution 67/290 provides some guidance for such reviews, more discussions are needed in order to develop an acceptable methodology and guidelines that have the full ownership of Member States and relevant actors. The reviews should add value to the implementation of sustainable development and the post-2015 development agenda without overburdening countries. With support from the international community, they should help countries to assess their sustainable development strategies. Under the theme "Strengthening integration, implementation and review: the high-level political forum after 2015", the 2015 meeting of the forum, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, can further discussions in this area. It can allow an exchange of views and provide guidance and recommendations on the best way to design the reviews while taking into account the different circumstances and stages of development of each country.

81. In preparation for the reviews, consultations on regional-level accountability frameworks are being held. The consultations also build on the lessons of existing regional-level voluntary accountability mechanisms, such as the African Peer Review Mechanism and the Pacific Island peer reviews.

82. As a lesson learned from other review processes, it is important to provide capacity-building for countries to prepare submissions based on national reviews of the implementation of national sustainable development strategies.

Improving cooperation and coordination within the United Nations system on sustainable development programmes and policies

83. In its resolution 67/290, the General Assembly decided that the high-level political forum should review implementation by the United Nations system. It is important to discuss how the system will be reviewed within this mandate. Lessons can be drawn from existing review processes, notably the ongoing peer reviews among United Nations system organizations regarding their environmental footprint.

Strengthening the science-policy interface

84. As discussed previously, enhancing the science-policy interface is one of the main functions of the forum and links to the other functions of agenda-setting and reviews, as well as identifying new and emerging issues.

85. As the prototype global sustainable development report has shown, strengthening the science-policy interface is a complex task. It is resource-intensive, involving the analysis of hundreds of sectoral assessments and collaboration with many agencies of the United Nations system, multiple scientific communities and policymakers, as well as other relevant stakeholders.

Increasing the role of major groups and other stakeholders and partnerships

86. An important challenge for the forum will be to sustain and deepen the engagement of major groups and other stakeholders in line with resolution 67/290, in which the General Assembly called for the enhanced involvement of major

groups and other stakeholders as partners and participants in the forum and its related processes.

87. Another dimension of the forum's work will be to define how it relates to voluntary multi-stakeholder partnerships and voluntary commitments. The place of such commitments in the institutional framework for sustainable development remains to be fully developed. Important issues include the status of such commitments vis-à-vis more traditional types of intergovernmental commitment, their monitoring and the accountability of those who made them.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

88. The present report highlights that the high-level political forum, at its 2014 meeting under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, has proved its potential to fulfil the mandates emanating from the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and General Assembly resolution 67/290. It has proved capable of helping to set the agenda of the entire United Nations system and the international community in relation to sustainable development. It also showed its potential to keep the implementation of sustainable development commitments under review. As stated by many Member States, the forum will be the main platform for reviewing and monitoring sustainable development goals in the context of the post-2015 development agenda, ensuring coherence and coordination and advancing poverty eradication and sustainable development as the main objective of the post-2015 development agenda.

89. The General Assembly may therefore consider calling upon relevant actors, including Governments; organizations of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions; other relevant intergovernmental organizations, including the World Trade Organization; major groups; and other relevant stakeholders:

(a) To fully engage in and support the work of the high-level political forum as it prepares to deliver fully on its role to review sustainable development goals in the context of the post-2015 development agenda starting in 2016;

(b) To fully implement relevant resolutions and enhance the high-level political forum as a dedicated platform for leadership and implementation of sustainable development commitments, recalling that the forum should maintain a strong focus on implementation at all levels and review progress in the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and all the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields, as well as their respective means of implementation;

(c) To ensure that the high-level political forum maintains a focused, relevant and flexible agenda that can address in a timely manner both the ongoing review of progress and new and emerging issues pertinent to the attainment of sustainable development;

(d) To ensure that the forum follows up on the processes launched at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and brings cohesion and complementarity among them, especially in the context of the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda;

(e) To enhance the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development by simultaneously engaging with the economic, social and environmental policymaking communities and other communities of practice on a continuous basis;

(f) To initiate discussions expeditiously on the possible scope and methodology of the reviews of implementation mandated to be conducted by the forum starting in 2016;

(g) To propose possible themes and areas, including new and emerging issues, for discussion at the high-level political forum;

(h) To further strengthen the science-policy interface at the high-level political forum, including through the global sustainable development report, while also enhancing their own evidence-based decision-making;

(i) To maintain a robust process to prepare the high-level political forum at all levels, with the full involvement of the regional commissions and the support of a stronger United Nations inter-agency process;

(j) To follow up, encourage and strengthen partnerships, initiatives and voluntary commitments on sustainable development while ensuring greater review and accountability through the high-level political forum;

(k) To enhance and ensure the meaningful engagement of major groups and other relevant stakeholders in the high-level political forum and national sustainable development processes;

(l) To use the high-level political forum itself to determine how best it can deliver on these objectives through the choice of its thematic focus and ensure that the forum policy guidance draws from solid reviews of implementation, as well as scientific and other evidence.

90. The General Assembly could also:

(a) Call upon the United Nations system to make further efforts to integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in its work and invite the Secretary-General to continue reporting on further progress in this regard. The high-level political forum could provide detailed guidance on this topic at its 2015 meeting;

(b) Invite the United Nations system to discuss the best ways to conduct reviews of its implementation of the post-2015 development agenda in the context of the forum.

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Sustainable development

Oil slick on Lebanese shores

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 68/206, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the resolution at its sixty-ninth session under the item entitled "Sustainable development".

It provides an update in terms of progress on the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 61/194, 62/188, 63/211, 64/195, 65/147, 66/192, 67/201 and 68/206 concerning the environmental disaster caused by the destruction by the Israeli Air Force on 15 July 2006 of the oil storage tanks in the direct vicinity of the Jiyeh electric power plant in Lebanon, which caused an oil slick that covered two thirds of the Lebanese coastline and extended beyond. It complements the information presented in previous reports of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/52/343, A/63/225, A/64/259, A/65/278, A/66/297, A/67/341 and A/68/544).

The report was prepared by the United Nations Development Programme, in consultation with the United Nations Environment Programme.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 68/206, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the resolution at its sixty-ninth session under the item entitled "Sustainable development".

2. It provides an update in terms of progress on the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 61/194, 62/188, 63/211, 64/195, 65/147, 66/192, 67/201 and 68/206 concerning the environmental disaster caused by the destruction by the Israeli Air Force on 15 July 2006 of the oil storage tanks in the direct vicinity of the Jiyeh electric power plant in Lebanon, which caused an oil slick that covered two thirds of the Lebanese coastline and extended beyond. It complements the information presented in previous reports of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/62/343, A/63/225, A/64/259, A/65/278, A/66/297, A/67/341 and A/68/544).

3. The report was prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in consultation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), building on the work undertaken by an inter-agency team[1] established for the previous reports. It provides a brief summary of the information presented in the above-mentioned reports of the Secretary-General on the subject and updates thereto. In particular, it presents the efforts thus far by the United Nations bodies to undertake, within existing resources, a further study to measure and quantify the environmental damage sustained by Lebanon and by neighbouring countries, as requested by the General Assembly in paragraph 5 of its resolution 68/206.

II. A brief overview of recent developments

4. The marine oil spill, which was caused by the destruction of the oil storage tanks at the Jiyeh electric power plant by the Israeli Air Force, resulted in the release of about 15,000 tons of fuel oil into the Mediterranean Sea, leading to the contamination of about 150 km of coastline in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, causing adverse impacts on the environment and the achievement of sustainable development, as referred to by the General Assembly in its resolutions 61/194, 62/188, 63/211, 64/195, 65/147, 66/192, 67/201 and 68/206.

5. Several United Nations agencies and other international, regional and national entities, including the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the World Bank and the National Council for Scientific Research of Lebanon, were involved in assessing the implications of the oil spill for human health, biodiversity, fisheries and tourism in Lebanon at the time of and in the immediate aftermath of the spill. A summary of their combined findings was presented to the General Assembly in the reports of the Secretary-General noted above. During the past year, UNDP commissioned a study with a view to measuring and quantifying the environmental damage sustained by Lebanon (see sect. III below).

[1] The inter-agency team established in 2006 comprised the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organization and the World Bank. The International Union for Conservation of Nature was also a key partner in this work.

6. In paragraph 4 of its resolution 68/206, the General Assembly reiterated its request to the Government of Israel to assume responsibility for prompt and adequate compensation to the Government of Lebanon and other countries directly affected by the oil slick, such as the Syrian Arab Republic, whose shores have been partially polluted, for the costs of repairing the environmental damage caused by the destruction, including the restoration of the marine environment, in particular in the light of the conclusion contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/67/341) that there remains grave concern at the lack of implementation of the relevant provisions of the resolutions of the General Assembly on the subject vis-à-vis reparations and compensation to the Government and people of Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic affected by the oil spill. This echoes and emphasizes previous Assembly requests. To date, however, the Government of Israel has not assumed responsibility for the relevant compensation.

7. In paragraph 5 of the resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to urge United Nations bodies and agencies and other relevant organizations involved in the initial assessment of the relevant environmental damage to undertake, within existing resources, a further study, building on the initial work of the World Bank presented through the report of the Secretary-General to the sixty-second session of the General Assembly (A/62/343), with a view to measuring and quantifying the environmental damage sustained by Lebanon and by neighbouring countries. The progress in this regard is outlined in section III below.

8. In paragraph 6 of the resolution, the General Assembly reiterated its appreciation for the efforts of the Government of Lebanon and those of Member States, regional and international organizations, regional and international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in the initiation of clean-up and rehabilitation operations, and encouraged continued support to the Government of Lebanon in that regard as the work was still ongoing. A project is currently under development by the Government of Lebanon for funding by the European Union that will include a component on the sound management of recovered wastes.

9. In paragraph 7 of the resolution, the General Assembly welcomed the agreement of the Lebanon Recovery Fund to host the Eastern Mediterranean Oil Spill Restoration Trust Fund and, in paragraph 8, noted that the Secretary-General had urged Member States, intergovernmental organizations and the private sector, among others, to make voluntary financial contributions to the Trust Fund, since Lebanon was still engaged in the treatment of wastes and the monitoring of recovery. It requested the Secretary-General to mobilize international technical and financial assistance in order to ensure that the Trust Fund had sufficient and adequate resources. To date, no contributions have been made to the Eastern Mediterranean Oil Spill Restoration Trust Fund hosted by the Lebanon Recovery Fund.

III. Actions taken to measure and quantify the relevant environmental damage

10. Pursuant to paragraph 5 of the resolution, and in response to the Secretary-General's request, UNDP in Lebanon commissioned a further study with a view to

measuring and quantifying the environmental damage sustained by Lebanon. The study[2] reached the following conclusions:

- The previous studies undertaken by international and national agencies (referred to in paragraph 5 of the present report) constitute a solid basis for the measurement and quantification of the environmental damage caused to Lebanon by the oil spill.
- The World Bank, in a 2007 study,[3] conservatively estimated the overall damage and clean-up cost due to the oil spill at about $203 million (a lower bound of $166.3 million and an upper bound of $239.9 million). The method of calculation and the basis for arriving at this figure are in line with Lebanese and international law.
- The World Bank figure did not include the passive use value of the coastal resource, which is usually added to the direct and indirect damage values. This amounted to $217.9 million in 2006.
- After adjustment for inflation and lost opportunity in terms of interest that should have accrued until mid-2014, the oil spill damages and passive use value amounted to $856.4 million, $448.8 million for the direct and indirect damages from the oil spill and $407.6 million for the passive use value.

IV. Conclusions

11. The Secretary-General wishes to commend the ongoing efforts of the Government of Lebanon to address the impacts of the oil spill. There remains grave concern, however, at the lack of implementation of the relevant provisions of the resolutions of the General Assembly on this subject vis-à-vis compensation by the Government of Israel to the Government and people of Lebanon and to other countries affected by the oil spill, such as the Syrian Arab Republic. This is particularly important as studies show that the value of the damage to Lebanon amounted to $856.4 million in 2014.

12. The Secretary-General wishes to commend the commitment of the international donor community in the past to provide financial and other support. Given the circumstances of the Lebanese oil spill at the time of the incident and beyond, the Secretary-General would urge Member States, international organizations, international and regional financial institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to continue their support for Lebanon in this matter, particularly for rehabilitation activities on the Lebanese coast and in the broader recovery efforts. This international effort should be intensified, as Lebanon is still engaged in the treatment of wastes and the monitoring of recovery. States and the international donor community are encouraged to make contributions to the Eastern Mediterranean Oil Spill Restoration Trust Fund hosted by the Lebanon Recovery Fund.

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[2] See www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/operations/projects/environment_and_energy/institutional-support-to-the-ministry-of-environment.html.

[3] *Republic of Lebanon: Economic Assessment of Environmental Degradation Due to July 2006 Hostilities, report No. 39787-LB.*